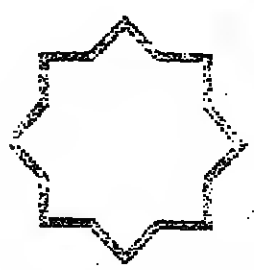


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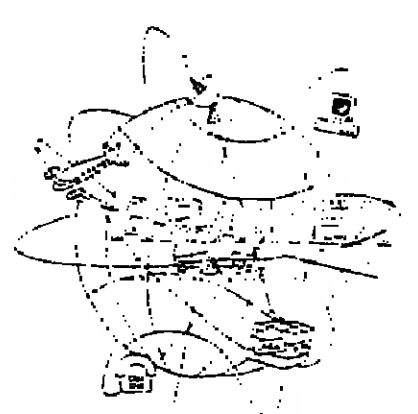


Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly

Le Jourdain
Supplément en français du Star

Jordanie: La route tue de plus en plus

Voir page 8



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AMMAN, 8 — 14 MAY 1997, VOLUME 7, NUMBER 52, 350 fils

اسبوعية سياسية مستقلة

Outdoor escapes

Page 2



Smog in China

pages 6



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FBI is said to probe US official for spying for Israel

By Nora Boustany and Brian Duffy

WASHINGTON—The FBI has opened an investigation to determine whether a senior US government official has been passing highly sensitive information to the Israeli government, according to sources with direct knowledge of the inquiry.

The investigation was launched in January after the National Security Agency intercepted a secure communication between a senior Israeli intelligence officer in Washington and a superior in Tel Aviv that referred to someone code-named "Mega" and an attempt to obtain a sensitive American document, US government officials said.

The officials said that the context of the conversation led them to believe that Mega may be someone in the US government who has provided information to the Israelis in the past.

The sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the investigation was focusing on US officials who would have had access to the document in question, a secret letter of assurances that then-Secretary of State Warren Christopher had given to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat after successful negotiations to withdraw Israeli troops from most of the West Bank city of Hebron.

In the intercepted conversation, according to two US officials, the Israeli intelligence officer informed his superior in Tel Aviv that Israeli ambassador Eliahu Ben Elissar had asked him whether he could obtain a copy of the letter given to Arafat by Christopher on 16 January, the day after the Hebron accord was signed by Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

According to a source who viewed a copy of the NSA transcript of the conversation, the intelligence officer, speaking in Hebrew, said, "The ambassador wants me to go to Mega to get a copy of this letter."

The source said the supervisor in Tel Aviv rejected the request, saying, "This is not something we use Mega for."

Asked Tuesday about the investigation, a senior National Security Council official declined to comment. White House spokesman Michael McCurry, traveling with President Clinton in Mexico, also declined to comment.

Ambassador Ben Elissar said emphatically Tuesday night that his government had not engaged in any improper activity in Washington, denying that he had made such a request or that Israel has a spy inside the US government.

"I deny it as strongly as one can deny anything," Ben Elissar said in a telephone interview. "I simply think that this allegation is ridiculous. ... Of course, I cannot guarantee for everybody, but if anybody in this embassy had this conversation or such a thought, he can be considered an utter fool, a fool."

The ambassador added that the allegations must have come from "an evil-intentioned source."

A statement issued by

Economic experts careful to applaud Jordanian-EU association accord

By Ilham Sadeq

Star Staff Writer

JOINING THE world to establish a free trade zone by 2011 and the building of a constructive dialogue between North and South can be seen as a double-edged sword. It may bring great benefits, but at what cost many argue.

Under a catchy slogan to secure a brighter future for nations, supporters of the move to a market economy stress the need to speed up efforts to join the world community "as soon as we can," or else "lose a golden opportunity."

The Jordanian government, ending a two-year negotiations with the European Union, has initiated the Jordanian-EU Association Agreement in Malta last month. However, it will not take effect before January 1999.

The initial signing is "a crucial step for Jordan since it has a lot of advantages, but it also entails heavy costs," Dr. Fahad Al-Fanek, a prominent economist told *The Star*.

What is really happening is that the media in this country is

simplifying the issue, without giving the public details about the agreement or even making them aware of its positive and negative aspects.

"Unfortunately, only the advantages are being explained to the public, but the costs are more important as this does have its effects on industry and the treasury," Al-Fanek said.

He explained that our treasury will lose revenues because European products will enter Jordan on duty-free basis, while the aid that the EU has promised to provide Jordan has not been defined yet.

Actually there is no assurance that EU's financial aid to Jordan, after the association agreement, will exceed its present level.

While the point of the agreement is to open up markets for Jordanian industry, Al-Fanek said that these markets are already open for Jordanian products because import duty in Europe is very low. "However, our products are unable to penetrate the European market," Al-Fanek then wonders the situation after the signing of the agreement.

But others have a much more enthusiastic view about the future General Manager of the Export and Finance Bank Adnan Al-Salkhi, said that we should have signed the Association agreement earlier. He adds that this matter is inevitable.

"Our industrial products are promising and I was pleased to see, during a tour to some factories, that we have a satisfactory industrial output."

"But the industrial sector in Jordan suffers from bureaucratic measures, and lacks proper planning to promote its products."

Dr. Abdul Jabbar pointed out that the agreement will bring new challenges and "encourage us to improve the quality of products in order to cope with international standards and specifications."

But Dr. Al-Fanek does not share this view. He maintained that the agricultural sector is unable to take advantage of the European market, except on a very small scale.

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Journalists express concern for future of press freedom in Jordan

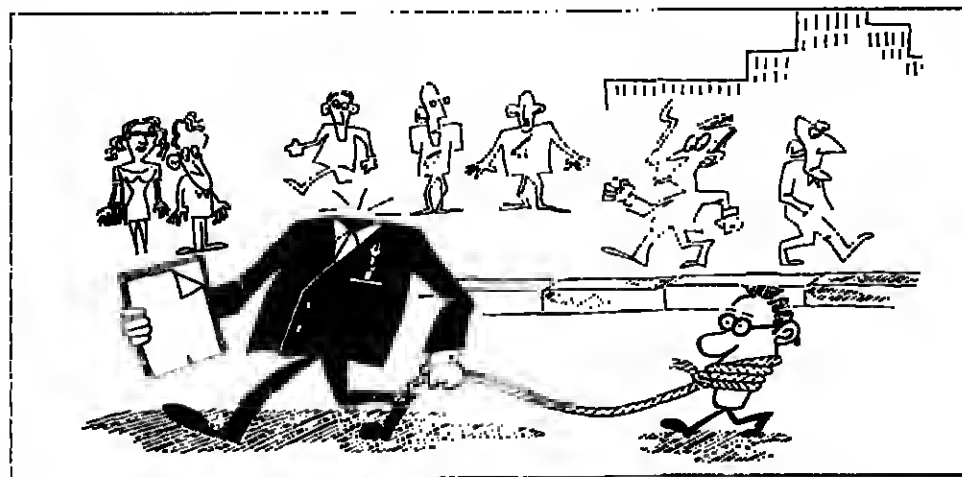
By Raed Al-Abed

Star Staff Writer

JORDAN'S PRESS marked the annual International Day of Press Freedom, 3 May, with a new concern for the future. For many in the press business, 1996 was not an easy year punctuated by arrests of editors and legal cases brought against publishers.

But the total picture is not all bad. In general, the Jordanian press is thriving and press freedom is still better off today than it was a decade ago. However, the debate continues in government, among the deputies and inside the press community on how best to assess the current experience and how to prepare for the coming phase.

In the center of the debate is the 1993 Press and Publication Law, which stands out as one of the most liberal in the region. Although many journal-



ists see flaws in it, they all agree that it had regulated the relationship between the press and the government and safeguarded the freedom of the press. Still the law continues to fall under criticism by press

freedom activists. "I can not claim that we have total freedom of the press in all aspects," said Mr Ibrahim Izzi, former minister of information. "But after lifting the martial law and legislating

the [Press and Publication] law, any citizen or group of citizens can publish a newspaper."

The Jordanian press has been classified by Freedom House.

Continued on page 2

Egyptian women scarred by hate

By John Daniszewski

CAIRO—Sixteen-year-old Marwa Mohammed Kamal, a good student with a bright future, had just stepped from her apartment in a working-class neighborhood when she saw the man she barely knew but with whom she recently had broken off an arranged marriage. He reared toward the tall, sinking young woman, flinging a foul-smelling liquid on her face, arm and back.

She collapsed in searing agony—the victim of what is becoming an increasingly common attack here.

She had been burned with sulfuric acid. Three years and 15 excruciating operations later, she still is so distraught and disfigured that she combs her hair over half her face.

"I can't describe the feeling," Kamal says. "What happened didn't only destroy my

face, my heart was destroyed even more." Now, she rarely goes out. "No one wants to see me," she says in a disconnected voice.

Sulfuric acid—or "fire water," as it has been dubbed by many here—has become a cheap, convenient and horrible weapon for an increasing number of Egyptian men furious with wives, girlfriends or women in general.

The men involved, critics say, flee all too easily after committing their crime. If caught, too often they are not prosecuted rigorously and the law itself provides for relatively light penalties.

But for scores and perhaps hundreds of women, acid attacks have brought lifetimes of shame, isolation and suffering.

The increase in such assaults across Egypt also has underscored what human rights activists see as an even

greater issue—an epidemic of violence against women here. It is fueled, they say, by poverty, male frustration and a rising tide of Islamic extremism.

Activists express their anger at the official indifference or complacency toward brutality against Egyptian women. A third of whom report in surveys that they are beaten at home and half of whom say they fear violence from their husbands.

"Violence against women is universal," said psychiatrist Aida Saif Al-Dawla. "What is different here is that, in another country, one could come out on television or on the radio as some religious figures here have and say there are situations when violence is legitimate and this would occur without any public reaction."

Indeed, in Westerners who have embraced many feminist ideas, it can be startling that there has not been a greater outcry about the wave of acid attacks in Egypt. There have been 22 of them in just the last

three months, police say. Doctors who have treated victims say the number is even greater.

The attacks, psychologist Mohammed Shaalan said, are carried out by men who feel powerless—in economic or political terms. This breeds anger and frustration they transfer to women. They resent them because they think they are "getting privileges because of their beauty," he said.

He noted, for example, that the cost of wedding ceremonies and even decent apartments are beyond the means of many young men in this impoverished society. Thus, marriage—which is the only socially accepted way here of being with a woman—becomes an unattainable dream. This, in turn, breeds frustration, jealousy and rage.

"These men think of refusal as an insult to their dignity and manhood," said Ahmed Magdoud, a professor at the National Center for Sociological and Criminal Research. "If

a man's relationship with a woman fails, he cannot accept the idea of being rejected, because he is a man."

Women's growing economic power—with more of them now working and pursuing higher education—is another frequent source of tension, said Suzanne Fayad, a psychologist at the El-Nadeem Center for Violence Victims. She cited one case in which a literate woman was scarred with acid by her less-educated husband.

"Lower-class men are financially frustrated, and have nothing of value to them except their manhood," Magdoud said, adding that, "To prevent these crimes, mothers should teach their sons that women have the right to reject men, as men have the right to reject women, and that men and women are equal."

Nabil Ezabi, head of civil security in the Egyptian interior ministry, stressed that Egyptian society is less violent on the whole than the

Continued on page 2

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Great outdoor escapes

Following the trails into Dana

By a Star Staff Writer

THE DANA Nature Reserve, 180 km south of Amman in the Tafleeh governorate, is one of the best vacation destinations for all the family. It is Jordan's own version of America's Grand Canyon, hosting some of the most beautiful rock formations in the whole Kingdom and overlooking Wadi Dana, Wadi Finan and Wadi Araba. Strictly administered by the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN), the Dana Reserve offers something for everyone. Nature lovers, hikers, birdwatchers and expert naturalists head for the reserve from all over the world to observe and enjoy its unique variety of fauna and flora.

Dana village (pop. 500) is the best example of early century vernacular architecture, with stone houses, alley ways and terraced gardens fed by natural springs.

The RSCN's guesthouse offers modest, but comfortable accommodation facilities, with rooms and balconies overlooking the breathtaking view of the wadis. Dana village has a small traditional inn for those seeking a less comfortable, and cheaper, place to spend the night. For the adventurous, the reserve's campsite, in the heart of the nature sanctuary, is the ideal place to be.

If you're staying at the guesthouse and plan to visit the reserve, you will need to make a 20 minute drive by car to the reserve's entrance (see instructions below). From there a shuttle truck will take you to the campsite (you can also make the trip on foot).

Once at the reserve you can follow marked trails into different strategic viewpoints of the sanctuary and neighboring areas. Hot meals can be arranged at the campsite, but prior notification is needed.

For the daring, one can make the three-hour journey on foot from the guesthouse to the campsite (and vice versa). It is a five kilometer hike through the most

beautiful part of the sanctuary.

A guide can be hired from the guesthouse and the journey should begin very early in the morning to avoid mid-day heat. It is a physically demanding trip, but it is worth every sweat drop! You are likely to see eagles, buzzards, larks, swifts, turtle doves, finches, chukars, butterflies, lizards, snakes and porcupines.

If you're really blessed you will have a glimpse of the reserve's most treasured animal, the ibex. Among the sanctuary's other wild animals is the wolf, fox, hyena in addition to the very rare lynx. The reserve has a wide variety of wild flow-

Eerie rugged landscape (right) is home to rare animal and plant life in Dana Nature Reserve. Old 'ar'ar, juniper, trees (left) are a familiar sight. The traditional Dana Hotel (below) is an ideal inn for adventurous visitors at modest prices



rs. trees and plants.

But before jumping into your car to make the journey to Dana make sure that you make reservations from Amman. Even if you're not spending the night at the guesthouse or the campsite, you need to make reservations just to get in. Only 75 visitors are allowed each day.

How to get there: Take the Desert Highway (you can also use the Kings Highway) from Amman and drive for about 150 km; take the Rasheediyah exit to the right and drive for about 30 km passed the cement factory. At the intersection turn left for Dana village and guesthouse (3 km into Qadessiyah village and then turn right making a 2 km descent into Dana village) or make a right to Dana Nature Reserve and the campsite (drive for 3 km passed the Ben Jazi forest and then turn left to merge with a gravel road leading into the cement mines. Drive for 1 km to Lahtha

springs, turn left and drive for 3 km into the reserve's parking and tower).

What to take: You need light clothes during the day, but make sure to pack a sweater since the evenings might get chilly. You need drinking water, especially if you are taking children, and cold drinks (there are no shops near the campsite, but there is a small grocery in Dana village). Comfortable walking shoes are a must, but if you plan to take long hikes then a heavy duty footwear is advised. In addition to a camera, you need binoculars, sunglasses, sunscreen and a cap. You can make the journey with a regular car. If you plan to do some off-road exploration with a four-wheel vehicle, then you need special permit from the RSCN in Amman. Hot and cold meals are available at the guesthouse, but make sure to inform the cook ahead of time.

Prices at the guesthouse are reasonable and the service is excellent. Toilets and bathrooms are clean at both the guesthouse and the campsite. ■

For reservations call the RSCN office in Amman at 8379312 or call the Dana Nature Reserve directly at 05-5084587.

Economic experts careful to applaud Jordanian-EU association accord

Continued from page 1

with European products, while we may not be able to embark on huge exports, he said.

Jordanian consumers could also be in for a surprise. President of the Jordanian Consumer Protection Society (JCS), Dr. Mohammed Obaidat is worried about joining such partnership. He said this matter needs careful study and an evaluation of our abilities.

Obaidat stressed that priority be given to inter-Arab partnership agreements, and the creation of a unified Arab position before entering into memberships in international blocs.

Like Al Nimri he wonders about the merits of speeding up

such agreements, "when our industry is facing crucial problems, and can be completely destroyed if confronted with international competition!"

As more and more become anxious about the challenges that may be brought by international agreements, Obaidat said that European countries are only seeking markets to promote their products, and "we shall be these markets."

Globalization, to Obaidat, means more unjustified hikes in commodities' prices, more sufferings for needy people and higher unemployment.

People have long waited for the so called "dividends of peace," and now they have to

wait for the "dividends of the partnership agreements with Europe and other countries."

According to latest official statistics, Jordanian exports in 1996 were JD 1,039,801,000 compared with JD 1,004,534,000 in 1995. This shows that exports rose by about JD 35 million.

But Jordanian imports in 1996 reached JD 3,043,556,000 against JD 2,590,250,000 for 1995. This means a rise of JD 453,306,000.

Thus, there is deficit in the trade balance of JD 1,993 billion.

This is of course before the start of the implementation of the conditions of the Jordanian-EU Association agreement which is due to take effect in 1999, at which time some argue that the economic conditions are likely to worsen further. ■

Journalists express concern for future of press freedom

Continued from page 1

an organization monitoring press freedoms worldwide, recently as being partially free in a region where the press is predominantly under government control.

Within a regional context "Jordan's achievements in press freedom are relatively good," said Dr. Nabil Al Sharif, editor-in-chief of *Ad Dustour* Arabic daily.

Nevertheless, "there are still many objectives that we must work for among them, the institutionalization of this freedom because, when the issue concerns press freedom, most of the time we are held hostage to the moods of governments," Dr. Sharif added.

However, Mr. Tariq Masarweh, editor-in-chief of the new *Al Arab Al Youm* daily—to be published before the end of this month—said the Jordanian press should not be looking at

neighboring countries as a measure of assessment. "Runners do not look behind, they look forward," Masarweh, a leading political columnist who was stopped from writing in *Al Ra'i* Arabic daily by the previous government, said.

A bone of contention between the government and publishers of the two leading dailies is that of government ownership in *Ad Dustour* and *Al Ra'i*. The Press Association and the majority of journalists say such ownership actually "limits press freedom."

The government owns 32 percent of *Ad Dustour*, through the Social Security Corp. (SSC), and 62 percent, 47 percent of which by the SSC and 15 percent by the Jordan Investment Corp. in *Al Ra'i*. The two papers are published by public shareholding companies.

Article 19D of the Press and

Publication Law gave the government and its corporations the right to own equity in newspapers, which should not exceed 30 percent of the capital of any press company. The law was ratified by Parliament in 1993, but until today the government has refused to adjust its ownership in the two newspapers in accordance with the law.

Currently there are talks between the government and representatives from the two dailies over this issue. "Many deadlines have been set by the government for the government to rectify the situation," Dr. Sharif said. "But all deadlines have been missed and there were always new interpretations that pushed these deadlines further."

According to Dr. Sharif the latest deadline for the government to settle the issue is the end of May.

"I think that after this date there will be no logical explanation for any postponement by the government to prolong its control of shares in *Ad Dustour* and *Al Ra'i*," he said.

The Bureau for the Interpretation of Laws confirmed earlier that the SSC is an official public institution, thereby it is obliged to reduce its shares in the two dailies to 30 percent in accordance to the Press and Publication Law.

"As long as the government owns shares in *Ad Dustour* and *Al Ra'i*, there will be at least a shadow of doubt as to the credibility of the Jordanian press," Dr. Sharif stressed. "We want to be able to serve the public by being completely independent."

Press freedom activists believe government ownership in newspapers constitute an infringement on press freedom.

"The law should be amended to bar governments from owning any shares at all," Dr. Sharif maintained.

The arrival of *Al Arab Al Youm* daily soon will make the issue of government ownership even more pressing for the government to deal with. *Al Arab Al Youm* is a shareholding company which is free from any government financial influence.

"I believe the government has to sell all its shares in the two newspapers. It should stay out of the press business completely," said Masarweh.

In spite of the improvement in the freedom of the press, Mr. Izziden believes the daily press is still bogged down by the decades-old tradition of "self censorship." "There is no real movement towards opening up to more controversial reporting. And I do not think one can blame the government this time, because it is totally the responsibility of the editors-in-chief," he added. Making a comparison with the weekly press, Izziden said that "in spite of the criticism these weeklies face, they are much more liberal in their approach. They are tackling controversial issues and are doing their job as journalists."

Mr. Izziden also believes that the press should concentrate on training their reporters to become more professional in their coverage of public issues.

Mr. Izziden, who helped draft the 1993 press law, said the law should be amended to clarify press offences. "I think the trick is not in sending more journalists to prison, but by allowing courts to compensate people who are defamed by the press," he added.

Mr. Masarweh agreed with Izziden's approach. "The freedom of the press must be created and developed by journalists. No one out of the press body can enhance these freedoms. Our weakness as professionals is due to our submission to traditional approaches and methods and lack of attempts to develop ourselves."

But Dr. Sharif expressed his concern for the future of press freedom "There are worrying signs that there will either be a temporary press law, introduced by the current government to curb press freedoms, or that there will be certain amendments to the current law that will put press freedom in jeopardy," he said. ■

Under the patronage of the Hashemite King, the Jordanian Press Association is a non-profit organization established in 1993. Its main objective is to promote press freedom and to protect the rights of journalists. It is currently working on a project to establish a Press Council in Jordan.

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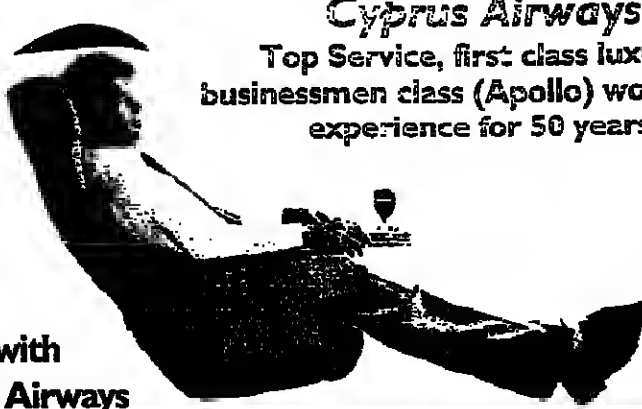
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JORDANIAN PAPERS

By Munir Ali

Time to face the facts

IF THERE is anyone left in Jordan who still believes that peace between Jordan and Israel has been worth it, the lessons of the last few days should open their eyes.

From the time of the Madrid conference until today, Jordan has shown consistent goodwill, an unwavering willingness to talk, to consider Israel's position, to compromise for the sake of the greater good of the region. His Majesty King Hussein has not spared any gesture to show Israel that Jordan is ready and willing to live in peace and harmony with Israel.

Why is it then, when the opportunity arises to show Jordan, and indirectly countries such as Syria, Lebanon, that there is some tangible benefit to peace, Israel fails to do the right thing. Instead, Israel never fails to bargain and nitpick and frustrate and exasperate its negotiating partners. Israel rides roughshod over regional sensitivities, trying its utmost to maximize immediate gains without any thought to the long-, medium- or even short-term benefits of compromise.

Take the mini-crisis between Jordan and Israel over water, for example. True, the wording of the peace treaty between Jordan and Israel is ambiguous. On the question of the hotly disputed 50 million cubic meters of water, the treaty states:

"Jordan and Israel will cooperate in finding sources for the supply to Jordan of an additional quantity of 50 MCM/year of water of drinkable standards."

Yes, this statement open to interpretation, reliable sources say was an "oral agreement" that the "water" would be supplied directly by Israel to Jordan. Now, with the benefit of hindsight, derived from more than two years of Israeli quibbling and haggle, it can say that oral agreements with Tel Aviv are worthless, and the treaty should have been more explicit. On the other hand, if Israel was truly willing to make a genuine goodwill gesture, it would go ahead and provide Jordan with the water. That, unfortunately, is not the way our "partners" operate.

Added to this injury is the insult of having to negotiate on this matter with none other than Ariel Sharon, a known war criminal and proponent of the notorious "Jordan option."

As it turns out, Israel has proven critics of the peace process right, once again. And once again, Jordan stands in front of the doubters in Damascus and elsewhere clutching its peace treaty and precious little else.

All the while, Jordan and the Palestinian National Authority look wistfully to what is ruefully called the "honest broker," the United States of America, for some sort of leadership, an expression of resolve, to resolve the riot act and get the peace process back on track. We can't wait much longer. It's time we wake up to the fact that the U.S. lacks the leadership to compel Israel to make a meaningful (as opposed to symbolic) concession.

And not only does the U.S. government lack leadership: it is riddled with people whose loyalty is in question. According to the Washington Post, unspecified senior US government officials, code-named "Mega," is working for the Israelis. Why doesn't that really come as a surprise?

So for those among us who put their faith in the United States, Israel and the peace process, let the events of this week be a lesson. ■

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JORDAN W E E K

An unconventional report on Jordanian news and views edited by Marwan Al Asmar



Which is it?
■ The government is angry, and so it should be, some might say, at the suggestion that it should have international observers to monitor the coming November Parliamentary elections. First in line to protest at what is seen as a farcical idea is none other than the Minister of Interior, Nuhur Rashid. The demand was made earlier by opposition parties, notably the Islamic Action Front, who said that international monitors would guard against any vote rigging during the coming elections. Rashid said it was shameful that such a suggestion be made. However, the minister's new stance contradicts with the one made by Prime Minister Abdel Salam Al Majali last month who said that the government would have no problem in allowing local and international observers to monitor the elections.

NCP is licensed
■ They talked about it. They said that it would happen and they finally did it. This week, the National Constitutional Party has become official under the leadership of Abdel Hadi Al Majali. The NCP, which can politically be regarded as right of center, composes nine parties—Al Ahd (Pledge) Party, Al Watan, Al Yaquba, Jordanian National Coalition, United Arab Democratic (Al Wa'd), Al Taqadum Wal Adalla (Progress and Justice), Jordanian Popular Movement, Popular Unity "Wahdawiyyoon", and the Jordanian Arab Masses (Al Jamaheer). These have sought to dissolve themselves and become a unitary party. Hakem Al Fayez was chosen to head the National Guidance Committee of the new Party. General Secretary of the NCP has seven deputies: Abdel Raouf Al Rawabdeh, Hakem Kheir, Mijhim Al Kureisha, Anis Al Moushah, Dr Jamal Al Khaneh, Tala Al Rumaihi and Abd Al Khaliq Shatat. Ali Farid Al Saad now heads the Central Council of the party.

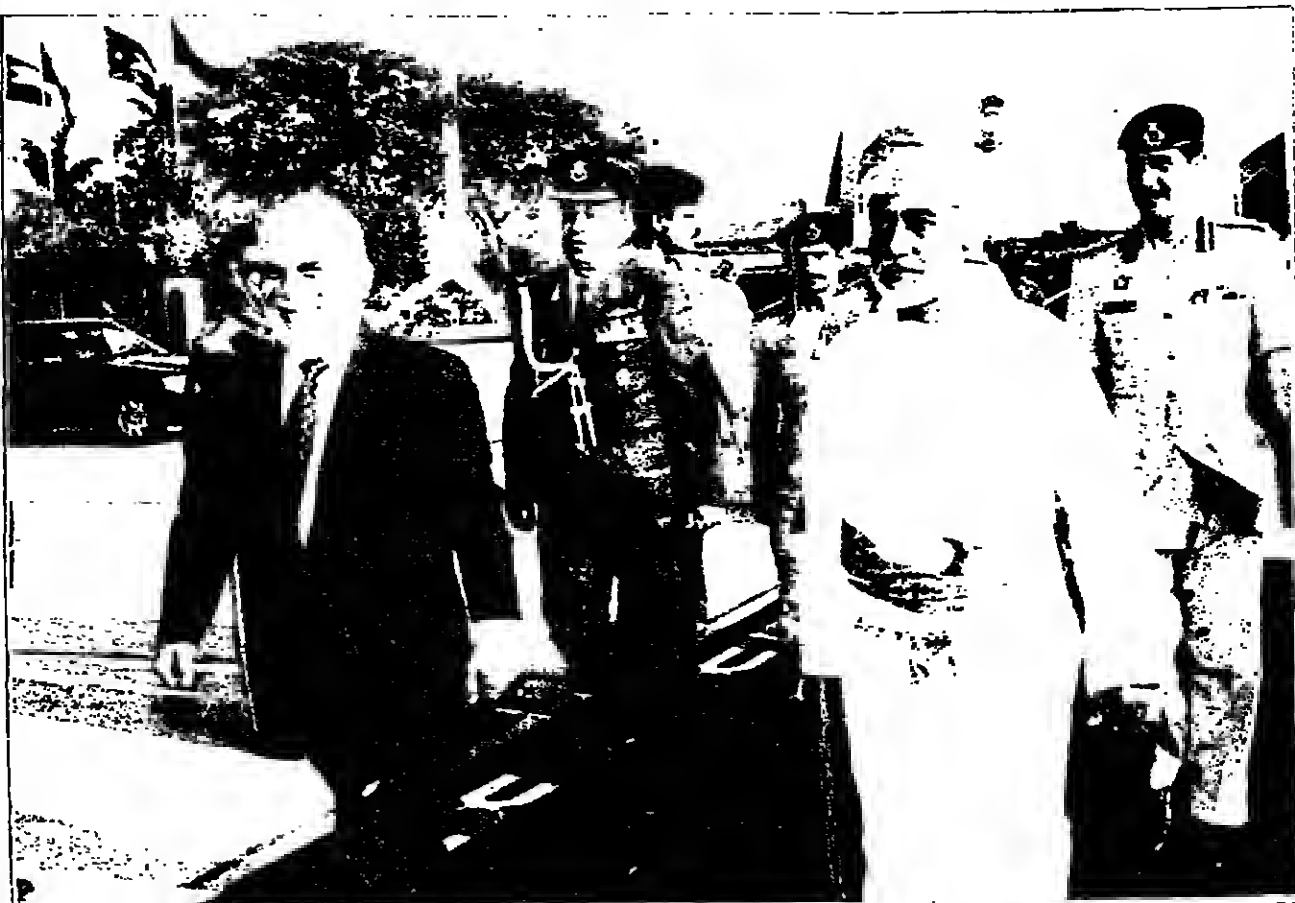
Two Iraqis caught after armed robbery
■ Two Iraqis nearly got away with JD 38,000 and foreign currency worth JD 60,000. The armed robbery happened last Friday on a money exchange shop in the Shapsoogh Complex in the Amman city center. As the owner, Subhi Mohammad Al Hajji and his brother-in-law were looking up, they were set upon by two Iraqis who snatched the money, shooting both men in the leg. The robbers then fled in a car but police were quickly alerted and a dramatic car chase ensued. Driving in a red Mercedes, the robbers were apprehended near the Raghdan Bridge, but during the chase one police officer was shot after an exchange of fire between police and the two robbers. It is understood that over 30 police cars were eventually involved. All this happened at about 11:30 pm. As the chase reached the Raghdan Bridge, the floodlights of the Raghdan Palace lit the area to make it easier for the police to encircle the car. The police operation was supervised by His Royal Highness Prince Ali bin Al Hussein who was in direct contact with His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan.

New President for the JWA
■ Jordan Writers Association has voted in a new president in an election held last Friday. Writer and columnist Fakhri Qawar takes over from Ibrahim Al Abbasi who was narrowly defeated. Qawar is a vociferous and vocal normalization advocate, which means that we can expect a more forceful JWA in that regard. But Qawar has promised that he will fight to improve the conditions of JWA members, many of whom are unemployed.

Fodder at the wrong price
■ A new case of corruption has been unveiled this week. This time it is to do with improper use of subsidized livestock fodder. It was revealed that 10 livestock importers have been feeding their livestock subsidized fodder. The Finance Ministry says that this is against regulation and that subsidized fodder can only be used by local herders. A committee composed of members of the Ministry of Administrative Development and the Ministry of Supply originally said that the merchants must pay outstanding dues of JD 1.5 million. However, a second committee in the Ministry of Supply later wavered the decision concluding that "it would encourage investments" if the merchants were let off. However, the Ministry of Finance is adamant. Ministry officials say the merchants must pay for the subsidized fodder, something that they should not have for their livestock in the first place. Now it is chasing the merchants to pay up.

Technical venue to be held in Amman

A TECHNICAL conference on pumps, valves and gates, organized by the Commercial Section of the French Embassy in Amman will be held this Monday 12 May at the Inter-Continental Hotel Jordan. It is jointly organized by the GEC Alstom Association, ACB, Bergeron, Sapag, Neyret and Peme. These are French companies that specialize in pumps, valves and gates. Specialist lectures will be held by experts from these companies. Representatives from the Ministry of Water and major Jordanian firms such as APC, JPMC, JPRC, NEPC and other Jordanian firms will also attend the conference. Other companies which are interested in attending should contact the Commercial Section of the French Embassy.



His Majesty King Hussein with Sultan Qaboos bin Said Sultan. The King paid a three-day visit to Oman this week where he held talks with Sultan Qaboos and other Omani officials concerning bilateral relations and other mutual interests between the two countries. King Hussein was accompanied by His Royal Highness Prince Mohammad, His Majesty's Personal Representative, HRH Prince Ghazi bin Mohammad, His Majesty's Cultural Secretary and other top Jordanian officials. During the visit, Prince Ghazi's engagement to Princess Arij was announced. Princess Arij is the daughter of Omar Abdel Rahman Al Monem Zawawi, Sultan Qaboos's advisor for telecommunications affairs.

Abu Marzouk vows to continue to fight for Palestinian rights

MUSA ABU Marzouk, freed political leader of Hamas, pledged to continue to work for the organization. "I will continue in political activities," Abu Marzouk said. "I have still a lot to do to serve my people and help them achieve their aspirations," he told a press conference at his home in Amman. Abu Marzouk, who was deported to Jordan after being held in a New York City jail since July 1995, refused to condemn acts of violence against Israelis. "Palestinians had no choice but to fight for their rights as long as Israel was not ready to concede them," he said. "If my Palestinian people gain their rights and settle their problems by peaceful solutions that is the best: the Palestinian people are desperate for peace more than any other nation."

Abu Marzouk, noted that Jordanian law did not prevent any citizen or resident from exercising his right of political expression. He dismissed the possibility of again being deported from Jordan. "My departure from Jordan was under pressure from the American government...and my return back was at the request of the United States and it's not logical this case could be repeated," he said.



Abu Marzouk during a press conference

Egyptian women scarred by hate

Continued from page 1
United States, with fewer than 1,000 homicides a year in a country of 62 million people. He played down the number of acid attacks and dismissed domestic violence itself as a major issue, saying it rarely reaches a point where it involves the police. He did note, though, that the government is sufficiently concerned to be considering controls on who may buy sulfuric acid.

The insufficient official response to domestic violence starts at the lowest levels—with police, say women and human rights activists. They argue that police do not get involved in domestic violence because authorities usually do not consider it a crime. Al Dawla says the light legal penalty for "crimes of honor"—in which relatives assault or even kill wives thought to be immoral or unfaithful—supports her belief that Egyptian society still condones attacks on women.

The legislative system of the country gives the person who kills his sister or daughter one to three years in prison for a crime (murder) that normally carries the death penalty, only because she seems to him to have disturbed the honor of the family," she said. Marlene Tadros, a human rights activist, said she found disturbing evidence of the breadth of the violence against women when she surveyed slum dwellers in Cairo. Almost every woman she met had been beaten; some volunteered that they considered it simply part of marriage.

"The reasons for the violence are the most amazing thing, all sorts of trivial stuff," Tadros added. "If she is holding a glass of water and it falls from her hands and breaks, he gets up and beats her. If he doesn't like the food, he throws it in her face and beats her. If he doesn't have his clothes ironed, if he doesn't have his clothes washed, he beats her. "One of the women," she added, "said... 'It's OK when he comes back and beats me."

People & Politics

Despite Spring the gloom continues

■ The mood is somber among Jordanians in spite of the fresh spring sun that greets them every morning. On the one hand they see no end to the political stalemate that has pinned the peace process to the ground. And on the other hand, they feel the economic recession that has beset the economy for the last three years turning into a deep and frightening depression. The new government has not helped either. Dr Majali, the man who negotiated Jordan's peace treaty with Israel, has done little to improve Jordan's relations with Israel. But that was to be expected. Jordan's problem with Israel is not about bilateral issues, but has to do with Israel's position from the Palestinians and their rights. Also, the Majali government has not yet presented its plan to jumpstart the economy. In fact, Jordanians are skeptical about the effects of the government's decision to float the price of farm produce and its intention to free the prices of gasoline, and meat among other strategic items. Flotation for Jordanians means a rise in commodity prices not the opposite. Some economists argue that the cost of living in Jordan has stabilized and that no steep rises are to be expected. But for low income Jordanians, who make up the majority, statistics are one thing and reality is another. So where is the good news? Hopes that the easing of UN sanctions on Iraq would bring some business to Jordan were dashed when the UN Sanctions Committee turned down a number of Jordanian contracts to Iraq. Iraq, meanwhile, is said to be importing most of its needs through Turkey, Syria and Iran. Prices at the stock market have continued to fall while lending rates offered by banks have never been so high at around 15 percent. It is true that the tourism sector is still healthy and is witnessing increasing activity, but the same cannot be said about other sectors, like agriculture, industry, transport and construction. The peace process was supposed to bring hope and investments. Today Jordanians see little of both. So the mood is gloomy and no matter how lovely the spring is this year, it is difficult to enjoy.

An end to an embarrassing problem?

■ Who did we serve by accepting to host Hamas political leader Dr Mousa Abu Marzouk in Jordan? It seems that everybody is thanking us for putting an end to an embarrassing problem. The United States, whose justice system seems to have succumbed to political pressures emanating from the special US-Israeli relationship, has done a great injustice to the man, Israel, on the other hand, has opted to drop charges against Dr Abu Marzouk and decided that it didn't want him extradited. That left the Americans in an awkward position because Dr Abu Marzouk no longer objected to his extradition to Israel. To solve the problem Jordan offered to receive the Hamas leader and so he flew to Amman this week. It was a humanitarian gesture, but politics had a lot to do with it too. Hamas leadership has expressed its gratitude to Jordan for receiving Dr Abu Marzouk. We are sure the US is grateful too. What about Israel? It should be happy too. The man appeared to be winning the media war from his cell in a New York maximum security jail. Now he will have to respect the rules of his host country and refrain from political activity that may embarrass his hosts.

FBI is said to probe US official for giving Israel sensitive data

Continued from page 1

Netanyahu's office on Tuesday night in response to questions said: "The reported story is absolutely baseless." US intelligence officials said that NSA transcripts involving possible counter-intelligence matters generally are distributed to officials at the CIA's counter-intelligence center; the FBI's Division 5, which conducts foreign counter-intelligence investigations; and the State Department's bureaus of diplomatic security and intelligence and research. The intelligence officials said the NSA had done nothing improper. Nevertheless, said a senior US official who said he had been briefed on the matter, the upper echelons of the FBI were dismayed that the information had been disseminated so widely. Because of the sensitive nature of the communication, said the source who viewed the transcript, it was recalled by the NSA about 12 hours after it was distributed. "It was taken off the street," he said. The source said that the transcript of the conversation between the two officers of Mossad, the Israeli intelligence service, was translated from Hebrew to English "awkwardly." He added that the conversation was not confrontational but took "the form of a collegial debate between two colleagues." The Hebron agreement, initiated by Netanyahu and Arafat at a border post between Israel and the Gaza Strip, marked a historical turning point in the tortuous efforts to get Israel's governing Likud Party to transfer land and limited governing power to Arafat's Palestinian National Authority. A day after the accord was signed, on 16 January, Christopher gave separate "side letters" of assurance to Arafat and Netanyahu. Israeli officials disclosed the contents of Christopher's letter to Netanyahu, but the contents of the letter to Arafat have not been revealed.

The most difficult issue in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations involved the three-stage rollback of Israeli troops from rural sections of the West Bank. Assurances about the rollback do not appear in the accord itself but in the letters from Christopher. Dennis Ross, Clinton's special envoy to the Middle East, said at the time the agreement was signed that the letters were not "guarantees as such" but that they represented an expression of US "will- ingness to act in accordance with our views." According to the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz, the wording of Christopher's letter to Arafat "goes beyond a general moral commitment. It can be said that if Israel deliberately violates the agreement, the Palestinians will be able to turn to Washington with this promissory note." One official with knowledge of the FBI investigation into the identity of Mega cautioned that much remained unknown. But the official said that if it turned out that a senior US official was passing sensitive information to Israeli authorities, it could prove more serious than the espionage case involving Jonathan Jay Pollard, a former Navy analyst who was convicted in 1986 of selling US military intelligence documents to Israel. Pollard was recruited to work for Israel by Rafael Eitan, an accomplished intelligence officer who worked for the defense ministry and the prime minister's office. Eitan's Leken intelligence unit ran Pollard as an agent, paying him to make sure he did not quit the operation. After his espionage activities were disclosed, Israeli authorities insisted that Pollard was motivated primarily by his love of Israel. They said it had been a "rogue" operation by Eitan, unauthorized by the Israeli government. To help ensure that US-Israeli relations were not greatly harmed by the Pollard case, Israel's intelligence services, including Mossad, worked with US law enforcement and intelligence agencies to determine what information he had passed along. It included, according to US officials, satellite photographs and information on Arab military systems. Despite that cooperation, however, many of the documents Pollard delivered to his handlers were never returned to the United States by the Israeli authorities. Pollard was sentenced to a life term in prison. Although Israeli officials frequently have urged clemency, Clinton rejected such a plea from Pollard last year, citing the enormity of his crime, his lack of remorse and the damage he caused US security.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

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with the ORCHESTRA OF THE NATIONAL MUSIC CONSERVATORY
Mohammad Odman Sidq, conductor

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Renowned Spanish Cellist JOSEF BASSAL

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The Royal Cultural Center - Main Theatre

Ticket price: JD 5

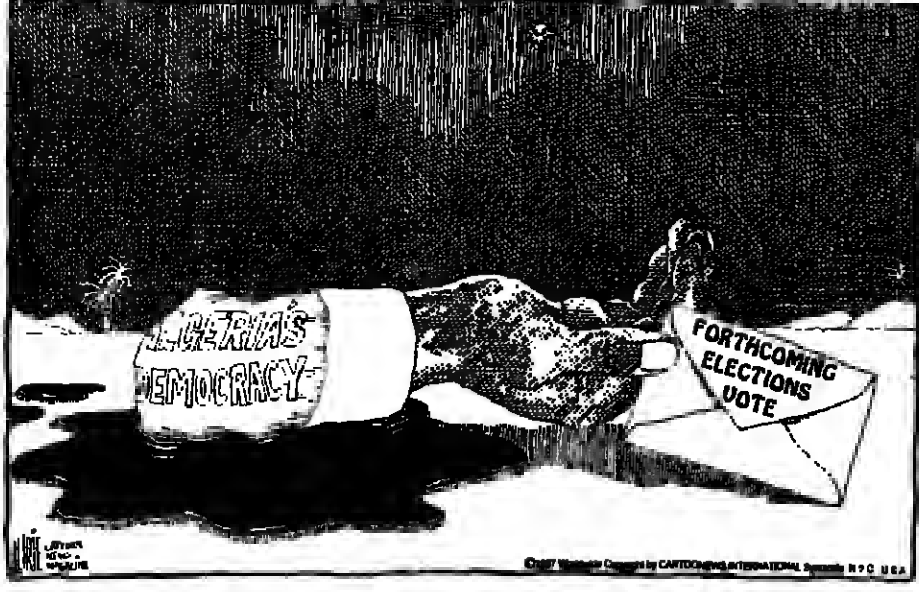
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LURIE'S WORLD



Our Say...

Dangerous alliance

THE EMERGING Israeli-Turkish military alliance, conceived with America's blessing and participation, should worry the Arabs very much. Both countries share long borders and are in conflict with their Arab neighbors. And in spite of the fledgling Islamist government in Ankara, the secularist generals appear to be setting their own political agenda—one that we as Arabs may not like or approve with.

Israel is still the enemy in the Arab world, until its actions prove otherwise. Peace treaties and agreements have not stopped Israel, especially, but not exclusively, under the current government, from pursuing one of the most ambitious militaristic projects in the region. Israel has reneged on its agreements with the Palestinians and it is set on disregarding calls by the international community to pave the way for a just and comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict based on the principle of land for peace.

Turkey, on the other hand, is a huge country with vast interests in the region. But more importantly, it is a country which has territorial problems with two important Arab countries: Syria and Iraq.

The generals, who ruled Turkey for years before handing in the rein of government to the civilians, have been uneasy ever since the Islamists, under Erbakan, made a stunning victory in the polls. Erbakan's political agenda differed greatly from that of the generals: He flew to Tehran and signed a multi-billion dollar oil and gas deal with Iran to the outrage of Washington. He took steps to reconcile relations with Baghdad and Damascus and appears embarrassed by the special relationship that had developed between Turkey and Israel.

While Erbakan's relations with the generals is an internal matter, the military alliance that is manifesting itself everyday is not. Such an alliance is a threat to Arab security and for us the writing on the wall is very clear to read.

The US talks openly about furthering its national interests by containing Iraq and Iran and the protecting of the oil routes. Israel's security view coincides nicely with that of the US and Turkey in the region. Syria, which is refusing to sign a peace treaty under humiliating conditions, is now being manifested as the rouge enemy—of all three members of this unholy alliance.

This alliance will be used against certain targets and to achieve certain objectives. We must not fool ourselves. The need to hold an emergency Arab summit has never been so urgent. The threat of war against Syria, real or not, provides enough grounds for even a mini summit to take place.

The summit, if and when it takes place, will not be an end in itself. It should spell out a new Arab position with regard to our own national security, Iraq, Syria and the peace process. It should send a strong signal to the United States; that there is a line to be drawn when it comes to our own existence. Israel, the only nuclear power of the region, cannot demand peace from the Arabs at no price. There is a price for peace and the underlined issue here is security, not for one party at the expense of the other, but to all.

Beware Mr Blair!

By Andrew M. Rosemarina

TONY BLAIR'S resounding victory in the British general elections spells misfortune for the United Kingdom. Although he will maintain many of the achievements of the last 18 years of Thatcher and Major rule, the strength and unity of the UK will be dealt two severe blows under his leadership. For in two major areas of policy, both of them central to the British constitution, Tony Blair and his colleagues will make concessions to those who seek to deprive the British Parliament of its sovereign powers over the British people.

You might consider these views an unwelcome jarring note, so early in the man's mandate. For is not the froth of victory still rising and bubbling from his overflowing pint of beer? Has he not this very moment achieved the greatest electoral landslide for his party ever seen in the Mother of Parliaments? And is he not talented, dynamic, able and charismatic? Why not allow him a few days to savour the sweet wine of success before the burdens of office press in on him, and turn that wine to vinegar?

True, Mr Blair is a politician of considerable promise, and he has earned a Roman-style triumph from his colleagues for bringing them the pinions of power. But his policy on the two crucial constitutional issues lay a shadow over Britain's future, a shadow which dwarfs his success.

And as the Jordanian public is largely unaware about these issues, and as they concern the character and strength of one of the Hashemite Kingdom's closest and most important allies, I felt impelled to sound this warning.

Mr Blair wishes to tinker with the constitution, and that is dangerous. What are the two issues on which he proposes radical changes? Devolution and Europe. In both cases his policies involve enormous intrusions on the sovereignty of Westminster, the British parliament, over the UK. For an appreciation of the significance of sovereignty in the life of the UK, it is essential to remind oneself of the composition of the UK, a complex amalgamation of four units: the kingdoms of England and Scotland, the principality of Wales and Northern Ireland.

Whilst England and Wales share a legal system, upon which most of the law of Northern Ireland is based, Scotland has an entirely different legal system with fundamentally differing

methods of dealing with everything.

To add to the complexity, the UK comprises a diversity of people on the surface united only in allegiance to an increasingly-battered Crown (for the repeated assaults led by an anti-moorish and alien press-baron, Rupert Murdoch, have done it grave damage) and by a common tongue, Shakespeare's. (Despite Colonel Qaddafi's claim that "Sheikh Spear" originally wrote in Arabic, the preponderance of evidence seems to refute that contention.) However, behind that allegiance to the Crown which, for many, is merely symbolic lies a shared *Weltanschauung* and common purpose, which has welded that diversity into one nation. In the words of Renan, that towering French thinker, "A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle."

A common glory in the past, a common hope for the future. To have done great things together, to want to do them again—these are the conditions for the existence of a nation. Wales has been governed together with England and in union with it for seven centuries. Scotland for three centuries. Northern Ireland for two. The peoples of all four areas have contributed enormously to the building of the British nation, and without any one of them, all the others lose immeasurably. The UK's strength, physical and spiritual, stems from its unity and its freedom.

Mr Blair's policy with regard to devolution and Europe threaten that unity and freedom.

One of the first bills Mr Blair proposes to submit to his new parliament provides for a measure of devolution for Scotland and Wales, involving giving them their own assemblies. At first sight, it seems reasonable to set up assemblies in those countries, to allow a greater measure of self-government for their people. But once one sets up an independent assembly, one sows a source of major division which can lead eventually to the total separation of the countries. Today, when there are conflicts between, for example, England and Scottish interests, they are settled *en famille* at Westminster.

But once there are separate assemblies in Edinburgh and Westminster, there will necessarily be a continuing struggle for power between them, sharpened every time there is a divergence of interests. This can eventually undermine the UK. Today, Scottish interests are represented in Westminster far beyond the number of Scots in the Union would justify, for, in addition to all the Scottish constituencies with their members of Parliament, the new Prime Minister is Scottish born and his Chancellor of the Exchequer and his Lord Chancellor, are as Scottish as the kilt.

Together, these three offices are, arguably, the highest in the land after the Queen. Wales also has its full representation of members of parliament, and there is a Secretary for Wales who sits in the Cabinet, to look after its interests.

In short, Welsh and Scottish interests are well-cared for at Westminster (though improvements can and should be made), and creating assemblies for them will inevitably lead to friction within the union, that may lead to its breakdown. As for Europe, the majority of Britons are aware of the achievements of the European Union, and of the mutual advantages it has brought to all of its members.

But surrendering, at this stage, further powers in major policy areas such as monetary policy, defence and foreign affairs to a Brussels bureaucracy, most members of which do not appreciate the British people's needs and deeply-cherished individualistic forms of freedom, will lead to long-term tensions between Britain and other European Powers.

These, together with some other European peoples' strained relationship with Brussels, may, ultimately, put in reverse the march towards European unity, to the disadvantage of all European states, and their friends. Mr Blair, beware!

Andrew M. Rosemarina MA (Jurisprudence) BCL (Oxon.), is a British barrister and specialist in European law. He contributed this article to The Star.

LURIE'S WORLD



"Boon voyage and good riddance, Mr. Major!"

Unity the theme for Yemen election

UNITY IS the overriding theme for nearly five million Yemenis who went to the polls to elect a new parliament in the country's first general election since the bloody 1994 civil war which left President Ali Abdullah Saleh in firm control. The elections are the first to be held free of threat, or fears of a southern secession.

The elections, western diplomats agree, demonstrated that the president and his party, the General People's Congress (GPC), has not just national control but nationwide support.

More than 2,300 candidates have competed for the 301 seats. The GPC retained an overall majority, while its erstwhile partner, the Islamist Yemeni Reform Group (IRG), divided the rest of the seats with independents.

Because of the 20 percent illiteracy rate, symbols have been widely used by the 12 political parties and independents to identify their cause. The GPC, for example chose the horse: Islah the sun. One independent used a mobile telephone as a symbol; others camels, falcons, dinosaurs, rifles, chalk and water wells.

The Yemen Socialist Party (YSP) the former ruling party of South Yemen before unity with the north in May 1990, officially boycotted the elections, although some dissident members stood as independents.

Now Saleh has a clear mandate from the electorate, he will have to deal with the number of national priorities confronting the country. These relate to making ends meet. Yemen is a small oil producer, some 385,000 barrels a day. Yemen is a poor country, with a 1996 per capita income of only \$280, half that of Egypt and two-thirds that of India and Pakistan.

Under an IMF-inspired economic restructuring program, President Saleh has unified the six exchange rates that existed two years ago, brought annual inflation down from over 100 percent to seven percent, and cut subsidies. As a result of subsidy cuts, the cost of living has soared.

Observers agree the mere fact the election campaign has been conducted in a relatively peaceful manner is a remarkable achievement, given Yemen's long and turbulent history as a country where Russian-made AK-47 Kalashnikovs outnumber its 16 million population by three-to-one.

Yemen has been one country only since 1990. For hundreds of years the northern part had been ruled by autocratic Imams from their capital, Sanaa, until their authority was challenged by republicans in 1962 and they were finally ousted in 1967. President Saleh seized control in 1978 and surprised almost everyone, not only by surviving, but by successfully consolidating his power.

But even today the writ of the central government does not always carry to the independent tribes of the central highlands and desert areas covering an area twice the size of the Britain.

Tribal kidnappings of government officials and foreigners is routine, though no for-



Sanaa—Yemenis stand in front of the posters of Ali Abdullah Saleh and other candidates just before the parliamentary elections held last week.

esigner has ever been harmed.

Historical experience in the southern part of the country could hardly have been more different. For centuries small localized populations had been ruled by numerous Sultans until the British took Aden as a coaling station in the 1820s to secure supply lines to India.

After the British withdrew in 1967, hard-line Marxist nationalists seized power in Aden and all over the former South Arabian Federation. Local Sultans were liquidated or, with thousands of others, fled abroad.

When the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1989, South Yemen collapsed with it. Within a year the YSP leadership embraced the illusionary panacea of unity.

Disillusion, however, quickly set in. The YSP found its influence circumscribed by the power of Sanaa, and many resented southern

oil revenues going into coffers controlled by the more populous north.

Resentment increased when President Saleh's decision not to condemn Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 caused a cut-off of all western aid, as well as expulsion from Saudi Arabia of nearly a million Yemenis who had lived and worked there for generations.

It was in this climate of mutual accusations of disloyalty, ballot-rigging and a southern sense of injustice, that the 1993 national elections were held.

Today many southerners are resigned, if not reconciled. But the main achievement will be that the free elections took place at all Yemen is, by common consent, setting an example that none of its neighbors has yet dared to follow.

Financial Times

Middle East

An Arabless 21 century!

WITH THE current state of affairs in the Arab world casting its shadow on our possible contribution to the advancement of humanity, HRH Crown Prince Hassan emphasized the dangerous prospect of entering into the next century.

The Arab world is almost referred to in the international lexicon with synonyms rather than content. The intra-regional clusters, with various area groupings emerging, fail to gain under the weight of disputes. It proves that they do not contribute to unity, but exacerbate division and discord.

It is not true also, that the perception from outside the Arab world is a distorted one. Our belief of this distorted image of ourselves is hampering us from acting collectively to claim a heritage that no one in the world denies. It seems that we (nationals of Arab countries) have not learned that colonialism, imperialism, and the various other "isms" cannot remain the metaphorical coat hangers that we conveniently use to escape from our responsibilities and giro them to evil forces existing outside and beyond our strength.

There is plenty that can be done, and we cannot go on in endless circles debating who we are, and what we are, trying to find a label for ourselves under an imaginary definition or another. Facts are there to be used, and both history, and geography reinforce those facts for anyone with interest to see.

Probing, for answers that explain the perpetual discord in our region is still following a class perspective sometimes; and an ultra-regionalist one at the other. Yet, the fact remains that the geography of the region is all inclusive rather than exclusive. We have no one dimension Iran, then Israel, and after that Turkey.

Regardless of ideological stands and enmities, they remain part of the geography of the region; the history that shaped the area, has been full of relations of domination, resistance and expansion. However, we have to go beyond and identify our region according to the urgency of imperatives that surround us.

We lack many of the givens that are taken for granted by the international community, but that is enough to prompt us to act collectively in the region, to surmount those difficulties by cooperation rather than a self-motivated approach.

For a start, the issue of water and its scarcity cannot be resolved in unilateral or bilateral approaches, but on a multilateral one that addresses individual issues within the framework of the collective benefit.

The refugee issue is also another striking example of the need for multilateralism for its future resolution, rather than squeezing the issue into pigeon holes of individual countries including Jordan, the biggest donor country, and recipient of refugees.

Intra-regional cooperation is crucial for complementarity rather than the way competition turns our comparative advantages. As for the international community, Jordan is in the forefront of a dialogue of cultures. There is no reason for the region not to move in the same direction consolidating our efforts in projecting ourselves to the world.

Our region has been known in its recent history by labels: Terrorism, extremism, and ostentatious wealth. Yet ironically, we have been the worst victims of underdevelopment and injustice. We have responded to injustice by being unjust to ourselves, in our approach to the world, and in our treatment of our most important issues. Now we are seen through the lenses of oil, Israel, and religious fundamentalism. But we must show that we have learned the art of governance, as well as functional dialogue.

Business scene

■ Jordanian shares are expected to go up to \$7.5 billion, according to ESCWA. Jordan indebtedness in 1995 was \$6.6 billion. But as a result of rescheduling this fell to \$6 billion last year. It added that Jordan's gross domestic product (GDP) will grow this year by 4.2%, which is the highest growth rate for ESCWA members. The annual average growth rate in Jordan, according to ESCWA should be between 7 to 8 percent to attract the increasing volume of manpower and reduce the level of unemployment in the Kingdom. Unemployment rate in Jordan is estimated at 19%.

■ In cooperation with four Japanese leading companies including Mitsubishi and Asahi Industrial Co., Ltd. Jordan Phosphate Mines and Arab Potash are launching a new fertilizer plant which was expected to be completed this year. This is the first joint venture to be executed between Jordan and Japan. Capital allocated for the project is estimated at \$24 million and amounting to \$4 million is invested in the plant. Appraisal operations started in late 1996 and output in commercial quantities started this month. The plant's designed annual productive capacity is 300,000 tons. First shipment of the product will be exported in mid-June via a Japanese vessel especially built to carry the Jordanian fertilizer.

■ Over last year the Housing Bank maintained a leading role in the banking sector. Its assets stood at JD 115 million, showing a rise of JD 22 million over 1995. The Housing Bank generated gross profit estimated at JD 6.42 million. Its reserves balance rose to JD 56.3 million, that is twice as much as the Bank's capital of JD 25 million. Deposits reached JD 9.8 million by 1996. Clients' deposits were higher by JD 55 million compared with 1995. In its latest meeting, the general assembly of the Housing Bank recommended to increase the capital from JD 25 million to JD 50 million.

Foreign Exchange

Tuesday, 7 May

	Buy JD	Sell JD
US\$	0.7080	0.7100
£	1.1510	1.1568
DM	0.4124	0.4145
¥	0.4801	0.4825
HK\$	0.1227	0.1233
NT\$	0.5624	0.5652
₹	0.3667	0.3685
₱	0.0419	0.0421

SATURDAY

General Chemical Industry

Arab Fertilizer Industries

New Investment Projects

General Chemical Industry	4.19
Arab Fertilizer Industries	4.35
New Investment Projects	4.05

General Price Pointer

Trade Volume

Stock Volume

Highest Traded Stocks

General Price Pointer	5.00
Trade Volume	5.00
Stock Volume	4.95
Highest Traded Stocks	4.95

The Star

Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly

An independent political, economic and cultural weekly, published every Thursday in Amman by Media Services International (Info-Media).

Editorial & Advertising: Telephones 652-380, 645-380, Fax 648-298, P.O. Box 9313, Postal Code 11191 Amman - Jordan. Email: Star@arabia.com

URL: <http://www.arabia.com/star>

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The Star is serviced by LA Times-Washington Post News Service, Cartoons International (Lurie cartoons), PANOS, The WorldPaper, Editors Press Service, STILLS and by correspondents in the United States and South Asia.

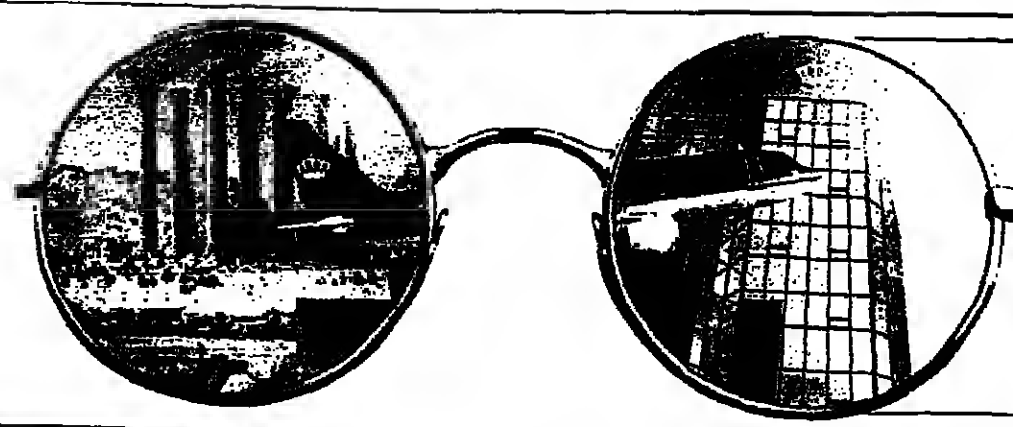
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Subscriptions: (annual) Jordan JD 20, Arab countries US\$ 100, W. Europe US\$ 200, USA & Canada US\$ 200.

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ROYAL JORDANIAN
Reflecting the Change.

Business scene

Jordanian debts are expected to go up to \$7.5 billion according to ESCWA. Jordan's indebtedness in 1995 was \$6.6 billion, but as a result of rescheduling this fell to \$6 billion last year. It added that Jordan's gross domestic product (GDP) will grow this year by 6.2%, which is the highest growth rate for ESCWA members. The annual average growth rate in Jordan, according to ESCWA, should be between 7 to 8 percent in 1997, the increasing volume of manpower and reduce the level of unemployment in the Kingdom. Unemployment ratio in Jordan is estimated at 13%.

In co-operation with four Japanese leading companies (including Mitsubishi and Asahi Industrial Co.), Jordan Phosphate Mines and Arab Potash are launching a new fertilizer plant which was opened in Aqaba early this week. This is the first joint venture to be executed between Jordan and Japan. Capital allocated for the project is estimated at \$34 million and amount totalling \$85 million is invested in the plant. Appraisal operations started in late 1996 and output in commercial quantities started this month. The plant's designed annual productive capacity is 300,000 tons. First shipment of the produce will be exported in mid-June via a Japanese vessel especially built to carry the Jordanian fertilizer.

Over last year the Housing Bank maintained a leading role in the banking sector. Its assets stood at JD 1136 million, showing a rise of JD 33 million over 1995. The Housing Bank generated gross profits estimated at JD 10.42 million. Its reserves balance rose to JD 56.3 million, that is twice as much as the bank's capital of JD 25 million. Deposits totalled JD 9.8 million by 1996. Clients' deposits were higher by JD 55 million compared with 1995. In its latest meeting, the general assembly of the Housing Bank recommended to increase the capital from JD 25 million to JD 50 million.

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Aqaba set on prosperity through free zone

By Ilham Sadeq
Star Staff Writer

MARCHING ON the road to prosperity is the name of the game for the south of the country. Nearly three years on, that is after Jordan signed its peace treaty with Israel, the Government decided to take the hull by the horn and make the whole of Aqaba a free zone area.

A bold and timely step that is still in the process of discussion. His Royal Highness described the decision as a "comprehensive national development action that enhances Jordan's communications worldwide."

Aqaba is today witnessing

an activity hype to improve its facilities and services to become a free zone area.

It is embarking on a whole new plan to simplify administrative procedures related to transit passengers arriving at Aqaba and encourage touristic investments.

Ali Al Dajani, an economic expert in the Chamber of Industry told *The Star* that "making Aqaba a free zone was an old demand from the private sector, and we can easily achieve such a goal as the port is close to other free zones worldwide." It is a rational and wise decision, he added.

However, he elaborated that only part of Aqaba should be

made a free zone. He stressed that if the whole of Aqaba is made into a "free zone," this would imply that the city could become "a customs-free area, something that could actually hamper the movement of trade."

Making Aqaba a "partially free zone area" would increase the harbor's importance as a commercial and touristic center in the region, Al Dajani continued.

On the other hand, the head of the Aqaba Regional Authority (ARA) Dr Fayed Al Khasawneh emphasized that making Aqaba a free zone area is a Jordanian decision that would attract worldwide investments.

The ARA functions as a governmental department that is authorized to carry out a comprehensive economic and social development strategy in the Jordan rift valley.

The Authority's first development plan was launched in 1985-1989 until the year 2000. However due to political events during the 1990s, including the second Gulf War and the setbacks in the peace process, this plan was altered. Changes were made in 1994 till 2020 to modernize some projects in the port and resume the execution of others to meet the requirements of industrial development.

Aqaba port is of a crucial importance to Jordan's econ-

omy. Making Aqaba a free zone will further highlight its link between Asia, Africa and the world, Al Dajani said.

It will become a passage for commodities destined to Europe and vice-versa.

Al Dajani added that such a development will help the trade sector and provide more job opportunities for people in the area. Also, transport and banking sectors are expected to see noticeable growth when concrete steps are taken to make Aqaba a free zone.

The annual operational capacity of the Aqaba port is 30 million tons but it presently handles about 10 million tons a year.

Affected by the second Gulf war when trade movement with Iraq ceased, the port's operating capacity went down to 24 million tons.

However, the plans are moving on to modernize the port and revive its activity through co-operation and co-ordination with international shippers.

Dr Khasawneh points out that Aqaba has the best infrastructure in the Kingdom and this means it is easy to make it a free zone.

No further details are available on the proposed free zone. Officials at the Public Ports Corp., say that the matter is still in the hands of the prime ministry, yet such a decision will have to be studied very carefully because of the enormity of the project.

Oil venue stresses negative aspects of sanctions on region

By Christain Doumit
Special to The Star

NICOSIA, Cyprus—A major international conference "Middle East Petroleum and UN/US Sanctions. Impacts and Prospects" was held in Nicosia from 28-30 April 1997. The programme which highlighted an overview of the petroleum industry in Iran, Iraq, and Libya attracted a panoply of speakers from the United States, Europe, Iraq and Jordan.

Papers by various experts covered the background of sanctions and the direct impact on the petroleum industry as well as their indirect effects on other economic sectors. Other topics included an assessment of petroleum reserves, and resources, oil and gas production, export capacity, the downstream sector and the need for foreign technology, expertise, and finance.

The first session which was chaired by Dr Hisham Al Khatib, former Jordanian minister of energy and current honorary chairman of the World Energy Council included several papers on sanctions: The view from Washington by Robert Pelletreau; A view from Europe by Dr Michael Polch from the European Commission; and a view from Baghdad by Dr A.A. Al Anbari, a former Iraqi ambassador to the UN during the last Gulf War.

Following the opening remarks, the keynote address: "The Oil Weapon: An Overview of Boycotts, embargoes and Sanctions," was made by Dr Edward Morse, publisher of the *Energy Intelligence Group*.

Dr Morse intimated that the US-imposed sanctions were adopted unilaterally. "They are imposed because it is deemed morally correct to do so and because it makes politicians feel good." This makes

their lifting extremely difficult. Dr Morse believes that sanctions have lost their diplomatic focus and clarity. This is not only confusing to allies and target governments but also involves the extrajurisdictional application of US law which is causing disagreement with allies.

It is ironic, says Dr Morse that the US should become the principal proponent of using the oil weapon but instead, he continues, the US should be exercising leadership to prevent its indiscriminate use as well as the use of secondary boycotts resorting to them only when the stakes are truly high and when there is an operating consensus on their application internationally.

But the fact is clear, Dr Morse concludes, the US can "get away" with using sanctions for a long time. The reason for that is inherent in the current structure of the chessboard of international diplomacy. The stakes for Britain, France, Russia, China or any other power are simply too low now and in the foreseeable future to engage in a collision course with Washington.

The next paper "The View from Washington on Sanctions against Iraq, Iran and Libya" was delivered by Robert Pelletreau, former Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs from February 1994 through January 1997. After stating that the US bore no ill will towards the people of Iraq, Iran, and Libya, Mr Pelletreau dismissed slogan of "dead containment" or "triple containment" as misleading and US policy toward each regime was costume designed to deal with specific problems as perceived by Washington. Referring to Resolution 986—or oil-for-food deal—which Iraq is portraying as the beginning of the end of sanctions, Mr Pelletreau says

clearly this is not the view in Washington. The US view is that Resolution 986 has made the international coalition stronger because it has removed the argument that the United Nations was responsible for the suffering of the Iraqi people—not their own government.

Another interesting paper was delivered by Dr A.A. Al Anbari, former Iraqi Ambassador to the UN during the Gulf crisis as well as head of the Iraqi delegation in the negotiations leading to Resolution 986.

In his presentation Dr Al Anbari says that Iraq has complied with all UN resolutions and that the Security Council continues to make new demand and find new pretexts for keeping the sanctions. Dr Al Anbari raises the ethical question of whether suffering inflicted on the Iraqi population is legitimate in exerting pressure on political leaders and he also notes that sanctions are complicating the work of humanitarian agencies.

Another important paper dealing with the international legal aspects of the UN Sanctions on Iraq was delivered by Peter Malanczuk, former legal assistant of the President of the Iran-United States claim Tribunal at the Hague—outlining the oil-for-food deal which he describes as misleading Dr Malanczuk establishes the failure of due process of law and the defects of the UN Compensation Commission for claims against Iraq a new proposes possible legal remedies.

Outlining the effects of Sanctions on Jordan and its Economic Sectors" was the topic of this writer. In his presentation Mr Christain Doumit, establishes that whilst Jordan was not a target of the embargo against Iraq it may very well be its greatest victim.

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MARKET WATCH

3-6 May

Highest and lowest performing stocks in the Amman Financial Market

SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universal Chemical Industry 4.10 Arab Financial Investment 4.05 East Investment Projects 4.05 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wool Industry 3.85 Arab International Hotels 2.76 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Steel Industry 2.94 Commercial Industry 1.64 Philadelpia Bank 1.90 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ceramic Industry 2.56 Jordan Electronics 1.90 Al Rau 1.67
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Union Bank 5.00 Jordan Petroleum Refinery 5.00 Dar Adhwa Development 4.92 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Philadelpia Bank 5.31 Jordan Petroleum Refinery 4.55 Jordan Rock Wines Industry 4.55 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> INAMCO 5.17 Jordan Trading 5.07 International Insurance 5.00 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NAMICO 5.45 Jordan Pipe Industry 5.23 Arab Insurance 5.13
General Price Pointer 150.310	150.000	150.500	150.120
Trade Volume 588081	407013	452884	634632
Stock Volume 703345	385396	465643	457899
Highest Traded Stocks			
NAMICO 68330	National Engineering 125600	Arab Investment 59412	The Housing Bank 178.787

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Blair appoints balance of Cabinet

LONDON—The Labor Party was voted in power last week after 18 years of conservative rule. Labor Party members were in jubilant mood as they are looking forward to enjoying the fruits of a Labour victory.

Today's Labor Party has new modern slick image that is regarded as necessary to lead Britain into the next century. Its party leader, Tony Blair, 46, is one of the youngest to be elected as prime minister.

After elections he got down straight to business. He completed a Cabinet of Labor Party friends and allies here Saturday on his first full day in office as the British government smoothly slipped into new leadership after nearly a generation of Conservative Party rule.

For 18 years, 18 long years, our party has been in opposition. Blair declared last evening. "Today we are charged with the deep responsibility of government. Today enough of talking, it is now time to do."

There were few surprises as the 43-year-old Blair, getting down to work at 10 Downing Street, filled the last of 21 Cabinet posts. The Cabinet includes a record five women and the first avowed homosexual to sit in a British Cabinet: Chris Smith as heritage minister.

For the key post as Northern Ireland secretary, Blair turned to the pugnacious and outspoken Marjorie Mowlam, who recently recovered from surgery for a benign brain tumor. She went immediately to Belfast, where all-party peace talks are moribund and Sinn Féin demands entry without a new cease-fire by its armed wing, the Irish Republican Army.

The Education Department was scrambling in the transition, as a team of readers with high security clearances was being assembled to read documents onto tape for Education Minister David Blunkett, who is blind.

Blair, who dragged Labor from its leftist roots to the political center, balanced right and left in his Cabinet choices. Free-speaking Clare Short's appointment as minister for overseas development will please the party's left, for example.

Other women named include Trade Secretary Margaret

Beckett, Social Security Secretary Harriet Harman and Ann Taylor as leader of the House of Commons, a key parliamentary job. Other appointments Saturday included George Robertson as defense secretary, Donald Dewar as Scottish secretary and Ron Davies as Welsh secretary.

The quick transition in part reflects the British system, under which the party in opposition—where Labor languished for 18 years—appoints "shadow" Cabinet ministers who become expert in a particular department and its policies. For example, Robin Cook, who will oversee Britain's foreign affairs, had been shadow foreign minister since the Conservatives took power in 1979.

The Conservatives, humbled at the polls, suffered a new setback Saturday. Michael Heseltine, former Prime Minister John Major's deputy and a strong potential successor as party leader, suffered what was described as a mild angina attack.

After the attack Heseltine decided he would not seek the Tory leadership.

Conservative headquarters reported. Analysts expect a messy succession fight in a party discouraged by a defeat of historic proportions and divided over Britain's role in a United Europe.

However, Kenneth Clark, the former chancellor of the exchequer and an ardent pro-European has said that he will stand as a candidate for the next elections for the Tory leadership.

This was the biggest elections defeat for the Conservatives since 1832. However, John Major who is now



TONY BLAIR
Britain's new leader

expected to become an ordinary backbencher took it all in good spirits. Speaking about his party's election defeat he told journalists that "politics is a rough old trade," you have to accept the smooth and the rough.

Amid the settling political dust there was time as well for housekeeping. Blair and his wife, Cherie, concluded that the two-bedroom apartment above the prime minister's office at 10 Downing St. is too small for them and their three school-age children. Blair is the first prime

minister since Ramsay MacDonald.

So they may move next door to 11 Downing St., which has five bedrooms and three bathrooms and is the usual residence of the finance minister.

As it turns out, Gordon Brown, the new chancellor of the exchequer and a bachelor, is one of the Blair family's closest friends, so an apartment switch is unlikely to provide the new government's first crisis.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Refugees with more than hate in common

"We can never forgive or forget that after the fighting they took Croats to concentration camps and killed people in the hospital," Maria said, referring to the massacre by Serb fighters of about 260 Croat men, some of them soldiers, sheltering in Vukovar hospital when the town fell.

By Guy Dinmore

MARIA SUSKI sits in a small room in Zagreb, trying to contain her hatred for a man she has never met. More than 200 miles to the east, Milan C., sits in a bomb-damaged house he has rebuilt and fears for his life.

They are both refugees. Maria is a Croat. Milan a Serb and he is living with his wife and three children in Maria's house in Serb-occupied Vukovar in Croatia's region of Eastern Slavonia.

"We want to go back but we don't want to live with the Serbs," said Maria, describing the horrors of living through a three-month bombardment of Vukovar and its final capture by the Serbian-dominated Yugoslav National Army in 1991. Her son was badly wounded while escaping through the front-lines deeper into Croatia. Her sister-in-law was killed.

"We can never forgive or forget that after the fighting they took Croats to concentration camps and killed people in the hospital," Maria said, referring to the massacre by Serb fighters in Vukovar hospital when the town fell. Most of their bodies have since been exhumed by the war crimes tribunal for former Yugoslavia from a mass grave.

Maria was lucky. She and her daughter were taken prisoner but released unharmed after spending a week locked up in a bus. They now live as refugees in the crowded Laguna Hotel, in the capital Zagreb, waiting for the day they can return. It is soon approaching.

With nostalgia, Maria describes her home, number 32 Slavka Rodica, close to the Dvudik monument marking the slaughter there of 455 Serbs by Croatian fascists during the second world war. The house had a beautiful oak fence, two bedrooms and a small garden with a magnolia tree, she says and gives me directions.

"They would rather tear it

down if they have to leave. They will destroy my house," she says.

I drive across fertile flatlands, past the nodding donkeys of oil fields, through the UN-controlled checkpoint to Vukovar.

Again Maria is lucky. Half the houses in her street lie in ruins, weeds and young trees sprouting amid the rubble. But number 32 is still there, its outer walls pock-marked by shrapnel, just one room blasted by two direct hits. The Danube, marking Croatia's eastern border with Serbia, sweeps by. Gypsy girls tend goats and scavenge along its banks.

Milan opens the gate the oak fence somehow survived and invites me in to the small kitchen for Turkish coffee. He tells his story of the war how his truck was seized by Croatian soldiers and used as a barricade. His own house in Vukovar was on the front-line and became a Croatian-held bunker before being burnt to the ground.

A rough-looking peasant-soldier in his 40s, Milan speaks with eloquence. He asks that his surname not be used, for although he says he was an ordinary soldier he is on a list of 150 Serbs accused by the Croatian authorities of war crimes. He knows he cannot stay in Vukovar. On July 15 the 5,000-strong UN force there will begin to pull out and hand over complete control of Eastern Slavonia and its 150,000 people to the Croatian government, based on an agreement hammered out between Croatia and Serbia in November 1995.

"This is similar to mine. That's why I'm taking care of it. I rebuilt the roof," Milan said. "I'd like Maria Suski to come and I'll put the keys in her hands. I hold nothing against her, only the extreme nationalists who want to come back."

Few Serbs in Vukovar truly believe the two communities can live together peacefully again. Officials estimate at least 20,000 people will soon flee while the majority will

wait and see.

Most vulnerable are tens of thousands of Serb refugees who fled to Eastern Slavonia from Serb-held Krajina and Western Slavonia during two lightning Croatian offensives in the summer of 1995. Many now live in the former homes of Croats and have nowhere to go. There is still a concerted campaign of intimidation against the few Serbs left in Krajina and Western Slavonia.

Both sides say they were the victims of the 1991-1995 war. For the Christian Orthodox Serbs it was a war to prevent the break up of Yugoslavia and protect their rights as a persecuted minority. For the Roman Catholic Croats it was a just liberation struggle to stop Croatia being swallowed up into a "Greater Serbia" ruled from distant Belgrade and implemented by blood-thirsty nationalist paramilitaries.

Sleazana Beric, a Serb journalist for the *Politika* newspaper, said in May 1991, before war broke out, she was beaten up in the street by a screaming mob then taken to the offices in Osijek of Branimir Glavas, an ultra-nationalist of the Croatia's ruling Democratic Union (HDZ).

"Glavas wanted to kill me and gave me to his soldiers to have fun," she said and produced court testimonies by other Serbs of war crimes allegedly committed by Croats, some in Vukovar hospital by doctors celebrated as war heroes in Croatia.

Nationalist passions surfaced again during local elections organised by the United Nations this month. The official campaign slogan of the fringe Croatian Justice Party (HSP): "For a happier Croatian family, one vote for the HSP is one Croatian (Serb nationalist) less to the Danube area."

In late March a group of Croatian politicians and the director of Vukovar hospital crossed into the town under UN protection and held a news conference. A crowd of angry Serbs pelted them with eggs, denouncing them as war criminals.

Maria Suski recalled the phone call she received soon afterwards from a woman who said "this is Serbian Vukovar" and refused to give her name. "We bombed them with eggs and when you come back we will bombard you with bombs," the caller said. Maria recognized the voice. "We were best friends. She came for coffee every day."

Caught in the middle is the UN Transitional Administration in Eastern Slavonia headed by Jacques Klein, a cigar-smoking, no-nonsense American general. Klein's job is to hand over control to Croatia and oversee the peaceful reintegration of refugees. To heal the wounds of war the UN has organized sponsored visits in and out of the region by 40,000 people, demilitarized the area and set up a joint Serb-Croat police force.

But hatred and distrust persist. People on both sides get threatening phone calls and messages. One fax sent to the Serb council in Vukovar bore the second world war insignia of the Nazi puppet Ustashe government that slaughtered many Serbs, Muslims and Jews. It "sentenced to death" Jacques Klein, the American General in charge of the UN Transitional Administration in the region, and 11 prominent Serbs.

Threats are coded in the language of religious and ethnic hatred. "Svjedok" Nestic, an economist working for the Serb assembly in Vukovar, said the owners of the house she is living in repeatedly called to wish her a Happy Easter and ask her if she was "feeling comfortable." The Catholic Easter falls one month before the Serb Orthodox festival.

Returning to Zagreb, I tell Maria that Milan is willing to hand over the keys to her house in person. I give her his telephone number. She is moved. "Perhaps we can all live together again," she says. "Who knows?"

Financial Times Syndication

When it comes to smog, China is the air apparent

By Henry Chu

BEIJING—Miss Zhang has her regulars, customers who come looking for a hit as often as every other day. They lean back in recliners while she sticks a tube up one of their nostrils. They inhale deeply for up to 20 minutes. Then they leave feeling invigorated and better able to cope with the stresses of urban living.

What is the source of this high? "Pure, medical oxygen," announces the poster on the wall of the Beijing Recreation Center, where Zhang, a sleek young woman, welcomes her well-heeled patrons.

Welcome to one of the smoggiest cities on Earth, where the sheltering sky is a leaden gray and the people beneath pay for shots of good, clean air in a handful of

"oxygen bars" around town.

The customers seek a variety of benefits—a better complexion, a longer life, a clearer mind. But the existence of these establishments underlines a single fact: In Beijing, air quality has become something of an oxymoron.

By one measure, the atmosphere here is two to five times dirtier than that in Los Angeles—a sobering statistic for this capital's population of 11 million.

The level of pollutants in the Beijing air continually exceeds standards deemed acceptable by the World Health Organization. And experts say the situation is unlikely to improve demonstrably any time soon as China races pell-mell into the industrial and consumer ages in one go, spewing soot from its factories and

fumes from its growing fleet of privately owned cars.

"When I was a little boy in Beijing, the blue sky was really impressive. I can still remember that," said Liang Congjie, president of Friends of Nature, a local environmental group. "Nowadays it's so hard for you to see the blue."

Things have reached such a pitch that the Chinese government, loath to admit failings of any kind, has declared pollution a national crisis.

In a surprisingly frank assessment last year, China's top environmental official, Xie Zhenhua, described the country's ecosystem as "grave" and predicted that China would have to spend \$30 billion over the next five years to bring air and water pollution under control. Beijing has

appealed to the World Bank for help.

"Everyone recognizes the problem," said Steve Judd, who studies energy and climate at the World Wildlife Fund's new office here. "Now we have to focus on solutions."

Already, China has spent millions of dollars in an effort to clean up its skies by phasing out leaded gasoline and shutting down thousands of the worst-offending factories. The government has toughened anti-pollution laws, even calling for the death penalty in severe cases of environmental crime.

But protecting the air remains a monumental task for a nation wedded to double-digit economic growth and saddled with political and geographical burdens that literally leave its citizens gasping for breath.

In Beijing, breathing the air for a day is equal to smoking three packs of unfiltered cigarettes, one study concluded. Lung cancer is now the deadliest form of cancer in China's urban areas, and a quarter of all deaths in China are caused by respiratory diseases, although it is impossible to separate the effects of pollution from actual cigarette smoking, a popular pastime.

"If you already have asthma, and then you go to Beijing, you're killing yourself," said Vaclav Smil, an environmental scientist at the University of Manitoba who studies pollution in China.

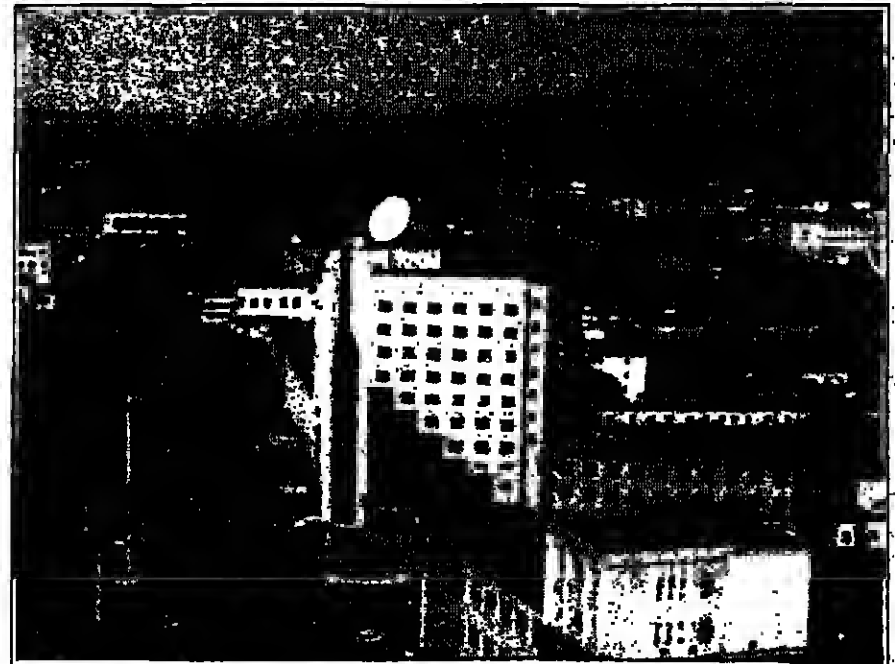
Much of Beijing's pollution is flushed into the air by industrial works, such as the massive Capital Iron & Steel Corp., not far from the summer palaces and parks built by Chinese emperors to enjoy the city's scenic beauty. The plant boasts a work force of 200,000 and unleashes high concentrations of sulfur dioxide, a major pollutant and contributor to acid rain.

"No capital in the world has such a big steel corporation, with 10 million tons of capacity a year," Liang said.

In the winter, whose chill is just now fading, the factory's enormous appetite for state-subsidized coal combines with that of thousands of household heaters to cloak Beijing with soot.

China, the world's largest consumer of coal, burns 1.3 billion tons each year, the source of 75 percent of its energy—and most of its unhealthful air, according to government figures.

Yet because Capital Iron & Steel is a linchpin in the economy, the government will no more ask the company to slash production or move operations than it will



Looking for clean air, Chinese cities may have no choice but to continue to build upwards

order Beijingers to stop heating their homes with the coal briquettes delivered by young men on bikes.

The result: eyes that smart, throats that close, lungs that labor.

"Yesterday I could actually taste the sulfur in the air in my office," said Seamus Ryan, an Irish doctor who works in Beijing. "It really is dreadful."

But for many of China's leaders and citizens, the war on pollution and the war on poverty cannot be fought at the same time, forcing a grim political choice in which the environment loses.

"You cannot close down all the factories overnight. They're the backbone of economic development," said Liang. "How would you deal with all these unemployed workers?"

Not can you remove Beijing from the north of China, among the dustiest settled regions on the planet. Winds sweep in sand from the Gobi Desert, which gets caught up with fuel-combustion byproducts to turn the air into a thick stew of particulate matter.

China has five of the world's Top 10 smoggiest cities, including Beijing and Shanghai, according to the World Bank, which ranks Mexico City at the top of the list.

Private automobiles have exploded onto the scene in Beijing. An independent local polling company recently found that two-thirds of residents are in favor of private cars, symbols of personal wealth in China's rapid modernization.

Compared with Los Angeles, home of 6.2 million cars in 1994, Beijing lags far behind, with slightly more than 1 million at the end of last year. But the number is steadily climbing.

"With more cars on the road, the air has become much dirtier," says one 30-year-old woman who sits by the street

throughout the day bawling fresh fruit.

The cars burn leaded fuel, which not only pumps tons of lead into the air but also renders catalytic converters useless—devices, now standard in California cars, that reduce pollutants. By the new year, Beijing motorists are supposed to switch to unleaded gas, followed by the rest of the nation in the year 2000.

With the increasing supply of cars, however, "even if these cars are cleaner and more efficient, at best you can hope that (Beijing) will be standing still" in terms of pollution, Smil said. "That's optimistic."

Smil and others doubt that China will be able to pull itself out of its ecological morass in the near future. But they draw some hope from the government's stated commitment to improving the environment, while understanding that political and economic realities often prevail.

Last year, President Jiang Zemin reportedly denounced the old formula of pursuing economic gains first, then cleaning up afterward. The state-run *China Daily* reported last month that the government shut down nearly 63,000 small factories between September and the end of March in a bid to stop the nation's worst air and water polluters.

Chinese journalists have been ordered to beef up their coverage of environmental issues, such as Beijing's successful push to install natural gas for heating and cooking in new apartments. Beginning in June, television stations in major Chinese cities will broadcast weekly air-quality readings. And the National Environment Protection Agency plans to set up a group of "green" schools within a few years to teach environmental protection and conservation to students of all ages.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

CROSSING BORDERS

Spring Exhibition

Bani Hamida

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Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Norway, South Africa, Turkey The United Kingdom & The United States of America

Exhibition Space: Courtesy of Jordan Construction Contractors Association Deir Ghobar - behind The American Embassy

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Under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor

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By Christina Dun Special to The Star

I was one of the ones followed by the old guard, all the guests I think the good old Swiss pianist. I gave a private piano solo's residence in Pedote.

His program was one sitting Mozart covered he was a pian. Franz Liszt, pianist himself, "S. gens am Daubense

The range of e from the fine lyric and Chapin to the Liszt is extraordinary, composer to whom the only possible imitators and fu 19th century and I minoff was entire technique is based pin always clung exploited the colors My favourite p Liszt's "Vallée d

"C brin

AMMAN (Star) Hamida and 12, to cross border Exhibition Hall's tors Association unique event hel Bani Hamida: li the patronage of Noor.

"Crossing Bo will start Thur breaking tree I Hamida affirm present new designs using as to present herit each and every t You will not t ticket, you will leave the kids a worry if, the ne your cat and do learning about n At the Bani H will get to know ada, Denmark, Italy, Japan, N Turkey, the Uni United States of

"Crossing Bo with friends of ing about what tant in their heri are all within or This demonstr ifestation that Ji size and popula for its human co to befriend cou no better fresh e

B broa

THE BBC Ar broadcasting i from May 5, I vice's largest after English hours a day.

Started in 1 of BBC Wor language se increased its hours to cles breakfast sho programmes, bro 17.75 hours a (Greenwich M World Ser)

Sam Young broadcasts by the £5 and Service in Is ment budget language pri broadcasting: ple in the An ally comped riment these ensure the remains the radio broadc Head of the McLeelan sat grammes will finally pree

كندا س انجول

Le Jourdain

Supplément en français du Star

Arafat et Weizman tentent de débloquent la situation

Le président de l'Autorité nationale palestinienne Yasser Arafat (notre photo) et le président israélien Ezer Weizman se sont rencontrés mardi pour tenter de débloquent un processus de paix au point mort. Cette rencontre, qui se déroulait à Erez, principal point de passage entre Israël et la bande de Gaza, est la première entre les deux hommes depuis sept mois. «L'important est que nous nous rencontrions après deux mois de problèmes», a déclaré M. Weizman. «Il faut rompre la glace entre nous et je ne serais pas venu si je ne pensais pas que quelque chose de concret pouvait sortir de cet entretien.» Yasser Arafat a lui déclaré que «l'important était que cette rencontre ait lieu». Ce contact israélo-palestinien précédait le début de la tournée dans la région du médiateur américain Denis Ross dont le but est de tenter de jeter les bases d'une reprise du processus de paix. M. Ross veut «rétablir la confiance» et tenter «de relancer le processus de paix», a indiqué un porte-parole du département d'Etat, M. John Dinger. Cette nouvelle initiative du médiateur américain semble toutefois laisser les Palestiniens assez sceptiques, M. Arafat ayant déclaré qu'il ne «pensait pas» que M. Ross allait apporter de nouvelles idées susceptibles de relancer le processus de paix.



Jordanie

La route tue de plus en plus

D'après de dernier bilan du département de la sécurité publique, le nombre de personnes tuées sur la route en Jordanie a augmenté de 17,7% entre 1995 et 1996. Et parmi les victimes de cette violence routière, les enfants sont les plus touchés.

Les services de la circulation routière du département de la sécurité publique ont récemment publié les statistiques sur le nombre d'accidents de la route en 1996, enregistrant une hausse de 16,6% du nombre de blessés et de 17,7% du nombre de morts par rapport à 1995.

D'après les responsables de ce service, ces fortes hausses sont notamment dues à la hausse de la population et du nombre de véhicules en circulation dans le pays.

En 1996, 33784 accidents ont coûté la vie à 552 personnes et ont fait 15375 blessés, indique le Capitaine Khaled Kilani, directeur du service des statistiques du département de la sécurité publique. En 1995, la Jordanie avait enregistré 28970 accidents, qui avaient fait 469 morts et 13184 blessés.

Deux facteurs majeurs d'accidents peuvent être distingués: les problèmes d'urbanisation et le comportement imprudent des automobilistes. «Au début, il n'y avait pas de plan cohérent d'urbanisation», explique le capitaine Kilani. «La population augmente, le nombre de véhicules aussi, mais la capacité des axes de circulation reste la même».

D'après lui, le plus grand nombre de victimes concerne les piétons. 239 ont été tués l'année passée par des voitures, dont 107 enfants de moins de quinze ans. Les enfants de moins de quinze ans représentent une part importante des personnes blessées en 1996. Selon le capitaine Kilani, cette forte proportion d'enfants parmi les victimes de la route tient au manque de jardins et d'aires de jeu. «Les enfants sont obligés de jouer dans la rue, faute de disposer d'espaces adéquats. La plupart des enfants sont morts en traversant la rue, ou

en descendant de bus».

Pour lui, toute la société est responsable de l'organisation de la circulation et de la sensibilisation des enfants aux dangers de la route. «Les gens, les écoles, les médias, les parents et la municipalité doivent être partenaires. Ensemble, ils doivent assurer la sécurité des enfants».

Le danger de la location

La première cause est due au fait que les voitures se suivent de trop près (16,2% des accidents). Viennent ensuite les dépassements dangereux (13,7%) puis les refus de priorité (10,2%).

Le capitaine Kilani souligne que le département chargé de la circulation a récemment pris deux nouvelles dispositions pour tenter de diminuer le nombre d'accidents. L'une concerne les voitures de location, et l'autre les camions-citerne.

Une étude effectuée par le département a en effet montré que la plupart des accidents dans lesquels étaient impliqués des voitures de location, étaient dus à de jeunes conducteurs venant d'obtenir leur permis de conduire. L'imprudence de bon nombre de ces conducteurs est en effet à l'origine de beaucoup d'accidents. «Les conducteurs pensent que, puisque leur voiture est un véhicule loué, ils peuvent le conduire imprudemment».

En 1996, 52 personnes sont mortes et 1242 ont été blessées dans les 2012 accidents dans



33784 accidents de voiture se sont produits en Jordanie l'année passée, soit 4814 de plus qu'en 1995.

lesquels étaient impliquées des voitures de location, contre 15 victimes et 464 blessés dans 1072 accidents en 1995. «Les chiffres montraient une augmentation de 246% du nombre de victimes en un an, ce qui a poussé le Département à réagir rapidement».

En conséquence, une nouvelle loi sur les véhicules de location a été introduite, stipulant que les personnes souhaitant louer une voiture doivent être âgées de plus de 25 ans, avoir le permis depuis au moins trois ans et être en possession de certificats de bonne conduite délivrés par les commissariats de leurs quartiers.

En ce qui concerne les camions-citerne, le capitaine Kilani souligne que la majorité des accidents concerne des véhicules livrant du pétrole brut.

«Tout accident impliquant un camion qui transporte du mazout ou du pétrole est en

général catastrophique, car le plus souvent, la citerne explose, tuant sur le coup conducteur et passagers». 29 personnes ont ainsi été tuées l'année passée.

Désormais, les camions-citerne doivent installer un tachygraphe dans leurs véhicules, afin de calculer leurs heures de déplacement et la distance qu'ils parcourent. «De cette façon, nous pouvons déterminer la vitesse des véhicules en calculant la distance parcourue et le temps mis pour la couvrir».

Cette politique de prévention devrait être accompagnée par plus de contrôles de police sur routes et autoroutes, et notamment des contrôles de vitesse, afin de parvenir à ralentir cette augmentation du nombre de blessés et de morts dans le royaume hashémite.

Mona Qaddoumi

Economie

La Jordanie doit mieux s'exporter

Après de longs mois de négociations, la signature d'un accord d'association entre la Jordanie et l'Union européenne est intervenue le mois dernier à Malte. Et la Jordanie doit profiter de cet accord pour tenter de développer ses exportations.

Finalement, l'accord de partenariat entre la Jordanie et l'Union européenne est signé. Ou presque. Les documents échangés entre les autorités jordanien et l'Union européenne au cours de la rencontre qui s'est déroulée à Malte au mois d'avril en marge de la conférence euro-méditerranéenne doivent être encore finalisés. Une dernière formalité qui devrait prochainement avoir lieu.

A l'heure actuelle, il est déjà nécessaire de se poser la question suivante: à quoi ressemblera au niveau pratique, le partenariat euro-jordanien? Celui-ci a pour but d'établir, dans un délai de 13 ans maximum, une zone de libre-échange entre douze pays méditerranéens et l'Union européenne. Et la première phase de cet ambitieux projet passe, pour l'instant, par le démantèlement des barrières douanières entre les pays signataires, dont la Jordanie, et l'Europe.

Mais il est aujourd'hui nécessaire de se demander à quoi ressembleront les futurs

échanges économiques euro-jordanien. Malgré des concessions faites par les deux parties, plusieurs points de tension existent, et notamment à propos de l'agriculture. Le jour où la Jordanie sera un grand exportateur agricole vers l'Europe est encore loin. En fait, c'est la capacité globale de la Jordanie à exporter qui est à examiner. Comme le montre le tableau ci-dessous, le volume d'exportations jordanien vers l'Europe reste à un niveau assez faible, même s'il a doublé en l'espace de deux ans. Les exportations européennes vers la Jordanie sont elles 11 fois plus importantes, atteignant l'année passée 964 millions de dinars.

Il est donc urgent de se pencher sur la faculté d'exportation de la Jordanie. La situation actuelle est la suivante: nous exportons vers l'Asie pour importer des biens de l'Union européenne. Seule la vente de services touristiques permet à la Jordanie de combler un peu le déficit commercial qu'elle a avec l'Europe.

Cette différence de 878 millions de dinars entre nos achats de produits industriels, agricoles et miniers européens et nos ventes de produits jordaniens est insoutenable sans aide économique. Or, l'économie jordanienne doit apprendre à moins compter sur les aides extérieures.

Dans le cadre de ce partenariat euro-méditerranéen, la Jordanie peut-elle donc devenir un exportateur de taille vers l'Europe? La réponse est malheureusement non, si ce n'est peut-être dans le domaine agricole.

Cet accord de partenariat donnera-t-il alors assez de chances à l'agriculture jordanienne? C'est peu probable. Et s'il est donc clair que ce accord avec l'Europe est souhaitable, il faut voir, voire inévitable, il ne faut tout de même pas exagérer ses portées. Nos problèmes demeurent très importants, et la solution à nos maux ne viendra pas nécessairement de Bruxelles.

Riad al Khouri
MEBA S.A.R.L.

1700 millions d'Ecu en 96

Le programme MEDA est le bras financier du Partenariat euro-méditerranéen. Il représente 3425,5 sur les 4683 millions d'Ecu des ressources budgétaires affectées à la coopération financière entre l'UE et ses partenaires méditerranéens pour la période 1995-1999.

Trois priorités sont définies pour les ressources MEDA. Tout d'abord, l'appui à la transition économique, dont le but est de préparer à la mise en œuvre du libre-échange. Ensuite, le renforcement de l'équilibre socio-économique, et enfin, la coopération régionale, en complétant les activités bilatérales par des mesures visant à augmenter les échanges au niveau régional.

Exportations jordanien vers l'Union européenne et les sept principaux pays acheteurs (en millions de dinars).

	1994	1995	1996
Union européenne	41	63	86
dont			
France	1	4	5
Allemagne	4	4	12
Pays-Bas	12	17	16
Italie	10	18	21
Royaume-Uni	3	4	5
Grèce	5	7	8
Espagne	3	6	9

Education

L'environnement fait école

Un concours sur l'environnement a été lancé parmi les classes de français de Jordanie, récompensant notamment quatorze élèves qui partiront prochainement en France.

Le Centre culturel français et de Coopération linguistique et l'Ecole française d'Amman ont lancé au mois de janvier dernier un concours sur le thème de l'environnement.

Toutes les classes de français des établissements privés et celles de l'Ecole française (du CE2 à la terminale) étaient invitées à y participer. Par équipe de deux, les élèves devaient s'intéresser à un problème précis de protection de l'environnement sur un site en Jordanie. Leurs enquêtes devaient être réalisées à partir de différents supports (cassette, photos...), mais devaient être accompagnées d'un article.

Le mois dernier, un jury a étudié les différents travaux rendus, en examinant séparément ceux de l'Ecole française et ceux des autres écoles. Quatorze élèves, âgés en majorité entre 15 et 16 ans et appartenant à la Jordanie, ont été sélectionnés pour participer à un voyage en France. Quatre sont scolarisés à l'Ecole française, six à l'Ecole du Rosaire de Misdar, deux à l'Ecole du Rosaire de Shmeisani et deux à la New English School.

Voici les deux articles lauréats de ce concours.

La fumée, ennemi dangereux des poumons et de la couche d'ozone.

Nisreen et moi sommes les filles de deux professeurs dans ce collège depuis plus de quinze ans. C'est-à-dire avant notre naissance. Nous sommes amies depuis la crèche où nous étions nées. J'ai demandé à ma mère un jour: «Où était cette crèche et pourquoi elle ne l'est plus?». Ma mère a répondu qu'elle était remplacée par

la salle de couture où maintenant les femmes apprennent la couture au 4ème étage à cause de l'atmosphère polluée qui a causé beaucoup de problèmes aux bébés.

Que les sœurs soient obligées de la fermer par pitié pour ces âmes innocentes après maintes plaintes contre le boulanger qui continue jusqu'à maintenant de chauffer sa boulangerie à l'aide du mazout.

Depuis notre enfance, nous souffrons, les élèves de tous les âges et nous, de cette fumée noire qui monte, nous jetant une poussière qui colle à nos visages, à nos cheveux et à nos vêtements... Nous savons aussi depuis notre enfance que Sœur Leandre frappe à toutes les portes depuis 1952 en vain.

Aidé par le Docteur Abdalal, nous vivons dans l'espoir de nous trouver le plus tôt possible une solution durable.

Nisreen Matarweh (15 ans) et Sandra Al-Hilou (15 ans).

Collège du Rosaire/Misdar

Pollutions de pâturages

Que faire pour que les chèvres ne mangent plus de sacs plastiques? Nous avons interviewé Mme Medley, professeur de sciences à l'Ecole française d'Amman.

Elle nous a dit: «Le plastique n'est pas biodégradable par la flore intestinale. Il s'accroche dans les rissus adipeux de la chèvre, et les pesticides peuvent, à long terme, entraîner des mutations dans cette espèce qui pourraient être dangereuses pour les consommateurs».

Installez des poubelles au bord des routes! Donnez des amendes à ceux qui ne respectent pas la nature! Veillez aux pâturages! Pour la santé des animaux et des consommateurs.

Heba Najada (10 ans) et Masry Grossmann (10 ans) de l'Ecole française d'Amman.

C'est la vie
L'agenda français d'Amman

Cinéma

Cycle consacré au réalisateur Jean-Jacques Annaud.

Le 12 mai à 20h30 au CCCL, La guerre du feu (1981).

Exposition

Peintures et dessins du collège de Nazareth. A partir du 10 mai au CCCL.

Portrait

Les deux rives de Tahar Ben Jelloun

Argentins, Africains, Suisses, Américains... Ils sont des centaines à s'être fait un nom en France mais pas un n'a oublié cet instant décisif: la découverte de l'Hexagone. Parmi eux, l'écrivain Tahar Ben Jelloun. Il quitte le lumineux Maroc pour étudier dans un pays gris et silencieux. Mais au moment de repartir, il hésite et s'installe à Paris.

Entre Fès, «cette ville où l'on étouffe avec ces pierres noircies par le mensonge et l'appât du gain» et Tanger, «incompréhensible aux siens, chère aux artistes qui n'est que déchéance», Tahar Ben Jelloun revient au Maroc dans son dernier livre. La nuit de l'erreur, pour y faire jouer légende et mythe de la femme séductrice, cruelle et destructrice. L'écrivain a fait de son pays natal un socle sur lequel il module son œuvre, recherchant souvenirs, lieux vécus, comme un manque. Tahar Ben Jelloun l'avoue lui-même, «la littérature répare la tradition des souvenirs». Capté, capturé par la culture française, reconnu comme un écrivain de marque, couronné et fêté à Paris, Ben Jelloun reste le plus Français des Marocains. Il écrit sur deux rives de souvenirs mêlés. Le Maroc: ses racines, sa terre, son «poème natal», comme il l'appelle, son angoisse quotidienne. De l'autre côté, Paris: une langue, un lieu pour écrire, un endroit pour vivre.

«J'observe, je scrute, je suis curieux de ce quotidien fait de bruit, de polémiques brèves, de scandales sans lendemain et de discours tellement semblables. Je lis des poètes, j'ouvre des romans français, je les feuillette, j'en lis certains. Je ne me sens pas très proche de cette littérature mais je m'y intéresse, j'ai envie de connaître et de découvrir. Je participe souvent à des débats, je ne me tiens pas à l'écart».

Venu à Paris une première fois en juillet 1961 -il avait alors dix-sept ans-, il a d'abord trouvé la ville toute grise, du ciel aux immeubles, ne comprenant pas pourquoi les pays

semblait privé de lumière. Ensuite, il a été frappé par la rigidité de l'expression des gens croisés au hasard de ses balades. «Dans le train qui m'emmenait de Saint-Lazare à Marly-le-Roi, ville où je suivais un stage de ciné-club, je me souviens encore du silence qui régnait et des visages fermés des passagers. Plus tard, j'ai remarqué que sous l'influence du bon temps, ils se transformaient, dansaient dans les rues. Je ne peux pas m'empêcher de penser que Paris est une ville maudite par son climat! Elle est pourtant l'un des rares endroits au monde où il y ait une telle fébrilité artistique, où l'architecture soit aussi exceptionnelle».

Dix ans plus tard, Tahar Ben Jelloun revient en France, cette fois pour préparer une thèse de doctorat en psychologie. Là, il est saisi par une toute autre impression. «J'étais extrêmement heureux d'être là. A ma grande surprise, j'ai découvert dans le microcosme des étudiants toute une variété de nationalités. Je pensais que cela se limitait à la cité universitaire, mais en sortant, je me suis aperçu que c'était un phénomène quasi général, qu'en France le métissage existe bel et bien. Je n'avais pas l'intention de rester à Paris une fois mes études terminées, mais curieusement, avant chaque départ pour le Maroc, j'étais angoissé et une fois sur place, Paris me manquait. Alors, petit à petit, je me suis installé en France».

Vingt-cinq ans après, Tahar Ben Jelloun est toujours là, devenu entre temps le plus populaire des écrivains maghrébins



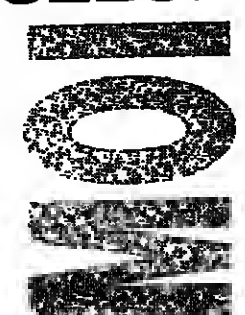
Tahar Ben Jelloun

de langue française. Il a séduit les intellectuels et les autres par ses histoires, ses poésies, ses contes. Il a le génie du contour. Une poignée de sable, un peu de vcm, des bouts de rêves, des larmes ravalées... tout lui est prétexte pour raconter une belle histoire. Héritier des troubadours des sables et trouvères du désert, Tahar Ben Jelloun emmène ses lecteurs pour un voyage dans le temps, l'espace et l'imaginaire. La frontière est

parfois indécise dans l'onirisme et la vie. L'auteur de La nuit sacrée, prix Goncourt 1987, se plaît à brouiller les pistes, jouant sur toutes les facettes de la réalité. Avec son audace érotique, son féminisme et sa mystique, son habitude à la poésie, les premières amours de Ben Jelloun. Il leur est resté fidèle.

Sylvie Bullo

SELON



La création

du nouveau Parti national constitutionnel (PNC) par la fusion de neuf partis centristes peut constituer un pas décisif vers la restructuration de la vie politique jordanienne.

En effet, l'union annoncée de ces partis pro-gouvernementaux s'inscrit dans la logique même du processus démocratique en Jordanie.

Il est à noter que le pouvoir, bien qu'il ne montre pas d'affinités envers les partis politiques en général, ne pourrait continuer à être le maître du jeu politique sans le soutien d'une majorité parlementaire cohérente et stable. Une telle majorité serait d'autant plus souhaitable que, d'ici à la fin 1998, le gouvernement doit en finir avec un gros dossier de réformes impopulaires, aussi bien dans le domaine administratif que dans le domaine économique. Et tout laisse penser que le PNC accepterait de remplir cette tâche.

Les discussions autour de l'union de ces partis centristes ont en effet commencé juste après que le roi Hussein ait défendu la thèse de la séparation des fonctions entre celles de député et de ministre. Or, cette thèse n'aurait de chance d'être mise en œuvre que si les partis centristes parvenaient à devancer le courant islamiste et à occuper une place prépondérante sur l'échiquier politique jordanien.

Etant donné l'enjeu qu'implique la création du PNC, ses dirigeants ont conscience de n'avoir qu'un seul choix, celui de réussir. C'est pourquoi ils ont adopté un mécanisme de fusion souple en favorisant l'entente entre eux. Ce mécanisme s'appuie sur deux documents: la déclaration de principes du PNC, et son règlement intérieur. Le premier document se borne à définir l'identité du parti et ses orientations principales, évitant ainsi de prendre position sur les questions d'actualité telles que le processus de paix ou le programme économique du gouvernement.

Et quant au règlement intérieur, il préconise une période transitoire d'une année au cours de laquelle les organismes dirigeants du parti seront constitués selon une représentation équitable de toutes les composantes du parti.

Les représentants de ce parti ont obtenu cette semaine auprès du ministère de l'Intérieur l'autorisation de créer le PNC. M. Abdel-Hadi al-Majali ayant été nommé secrétaire général.

La tâche la plus importante qui attend cette nouvelle formation politique est la préparation des élections législatives qui doivent avoir lieu au début du mois de novembre, en cherchant à réaliser un score qui lui offrirait la majorité parlementaire.

Un objectif qui ne va pas manquer d'inquiéter les autres partis jordanien. Le courant islamiste commença à saisir le défi qu'il aura à relever au cours de la prochaine campagne électorale, et de nombreuses manœuvres sont à prévoir au sein des partis nationaux, libéraux ou de gauche dans le but de réaliser de nouvelles alliances électorales.

Hussein Abu-Rumman

Royal Cultural Centre
American Centre Lebanon
British Council
French Cultural Centre
Goethe Institute
German Institute (Sp)
Turkish Cultural Centre
Haya Arts Centre
Y.W.C.A.
Y.W.M.C.A.
Dar al Fann
Alra Art Gallery
Baladna Art Gallery
Nahla Al Mashout Theatre
Nabul & Hisham Theatre

Diplomatic

Algerian
Austrian
Austrian
Bahraini
Brazilian
Belgian
Bulgarian
Canadian
Chilean
Cypriot Honorary Cons
Czech
Danish Consulate Gen
Finnish Consulate
French
German
Greek
Hungarian
Icelandic Consulate
Indian
Indonesian
Iraqi
Italian
Japanese
Kuwaiti
Libyan
Lebanese
Moroccan
Netherlands
New Zealand Consulate
North Korean
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Omani
Pakistani
Palestine
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Qatari
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RAIS

Al-Jab

CARRIAGE

CARRIAGE

MAJESQ

THE STAR'S
WORKSTATION
COMPUTING & HIGH TECH

Edited by Zeid Nasser

Computer & IT
companies

Welcome to The
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the absolute source
on what's hot and
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A look at the role of telecommunications in disaster-relief areas:

A true life saver

By Jawad Abbassi
Special to The Star

TELECOMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY in its different forms is usually associated with its use in business and personal affairs.

Investors look into the availability and reliability of telecommunications infrastructure as one of the guidelines on whether to invest in a certain country/area or not.

Governments also pay close attention to the development of telecommunications infrastructure for the same reason of encouraging investment and business operations. While telecommunications importance in business has attained fame and glory, its vital role in humanitarian assistance is not heralded as much.

This is because people never witness first hand the exceptional role that telecommunications technology play in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts. The fact remains however, that the advances in telecommunications have enabled the many different aid agencies working around the world to reliably keep in contact with disaster-struck areas and to coordinate their relief activities and operations.

As the different countries of the world and the ITU celebrate the World Telecommunication Day on May 17th—which coincides with the founding of the

International Telecommunication Union in Paris 132 years ago—the theme of this year's event will be "Telecommunications and Humanitarian Affairs."

The choice of this theme is intended to shed more light on the increasingly vital link between telecommunications

non-existent wire based infrastructure. It is worthy of note that the Red Cross in Jordan, coordinates its work in Iraq through this traditional but highly effective way.

While Marcony—the Italian scientist that made the first successful Radio transmission—would be thrilled by how traditional Radio is helping in humanitarian aid, he probably would also be interested in the new developments that use the radio spectrum and that proved to be of equal importance to relief work.

For instance, mobile telephony can be used to get information to victims and hence have become indispensable for relief workers who use it also to coordinate team efforts while in the field and to mobilize quick emergency actions such as evacuations.

Of course, mobile phones can't replace traditional radio in some remote areas or severely stricken ones, however they are still quite useful in most relief cases.

The newest telecommunications systems, currently under development, promise to be a greater asset to relief and humanitarian assistance than traditional radio. These systems, due to be launched in five years, are based on constellation of Low and Medium Earth Orbiting satellites (LEO and MEOs) which will allow for global seamless mobile tel-



and relief works following disasters such as earthquakes, floods, famine, wars and cyclones.

According to the ITU, the most useful telecommunications tools, in disaster relief are the "radio-communications" based ones which use the Radio spectrum to interconnect relief operations. Its great utility is a natural result of its high level of reliability, the portability of its equipment and its "high disaster-survival capability"; since Radio communications don't rely much on wires laid underground or on poles, it can still be used in disaster areas of greatly damaged or

Tatung appoints General Computers & Electronics (GCE) as regional dealer

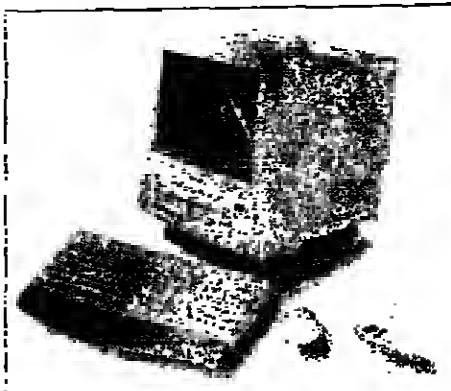
TATUNG, ONE of Taiwan's largest personal computer manufacturers, has demonstrated its commitment to the Middle East through the appointment of a regional dealer.

General Computers & Electronics (GCE) is an Amman-based company that will be responsible for Tatung computer products in the Middle East.

Mr Youssef Barghouti, general manager of GCE, commented on the appointment saying that, "The markets we will include the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Qatar, Jordan and Palestinian territories. Other countries will be added later on." According to Mr Barghouti, Tatung aspires to gain a market share of about 3 to 4 percent in the Middle East, which is similar to its worldwide market share. Tatung's worldwide sales last

year amounted to around two billion computer system, in addition to over four and a half million monitor produced by Tatung.

Mr Barghouti stated that Tatung products will be well supported in the region, through effective after-sales support and services. Also, Tatung components and products will be readily available in the region through the creation of a storage facility in Jordan's free trade zone. This will mean that users can rest assured to receive their orders on time and at fixed prices.



Tatung personal computers include desktops and notebooks, in addition to other products such as monitors and CD-ROM drives. For more information on Tatung products available in Jordan and the region, contact GCE at telephone ++ 5513879 or fax 5513509.

A new Internet Cafe opens in Amman

IT LOOKS like their is a growing trend to open Internet cafe's in Amman. Following Books@Cafe, a second cafe has opened on the University of Jordan Street.

The owners are Mr Ali Masimi and Mr Abdel Ra'ouf Douglas.

According to Mr Masimi, the cafe offers 10 computer

systems used for Internet access. The cafe is supplied with a leased line from Global One/Sprint Jordan, making it the first such cafe to be equipped with one.

So far, the cafe has not been officially opened, but it is attracting a considerable number of visitors. Access rates to the Internet for cafe visitors are

JD 5 for one hour, JD 2.5 for half an hour and JD 1.250 for a quarter of an hour.

The cafe mainly serves light and hot drinks and is open every day, mornings, afternoons and evenings.

The Cafe is located in front of the main gate at the University of Jordan, near Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant.

News update

Kasparov beaten by computer

As part of a series of six games, a computer called "Deep Blue", from IBM, beat the world chess player, Karpov last week.

This was a rare occasion when the computer outsmarted Kasparov, the world's current chess champion. It marked the second time this ever happened.

Deep Blue is an IBM RS/6000 RISC system with parallel processors that have been extensively programmed.

Deep Blue, an IBM RS/6000 SP parallel processor with specialized microchips for chess, calculates hundreds of millions of moves per second.

Now, the series is tied, two

games to two games, and it remains to be seen if Kasparov will emerge victor by the sixth game or not.

NETS makes special 'introductory offer'

In keeping with its plans to introduce full Internet Service Provider (ISP) services in Jordan soon, NETS is currently offering all its bulletin board service (BBS) subscribers the incentive of five free hours on the World Wide Web.

It is expected that NETS will offer Internet services as a ramp-up from the core BBS, as the likes of America On Line and CompuServe do.

For more information, contact NETS Sales department on telephone 619870.

INTERFACE

BY ZEID NASSER

Windows PCs, that fit in your pocket

WELL, FINALLY they have arrived; pocket-size, hand-held devices that offer Microsoft Windows CE as a standard operating system.

In other words, you can now carry a Windows-based computer in your pocket.

For a long time, hand-held devices were positioned on the border between personal computers and personal organizers, due to the use of proprietary operating systems which allowed minimum connectivity and interchangeability of information with computers. However, Microsoft has worked hard over the past couple of years to create a workable standard that will truly allow users to carry their office applications and information in their pockets. Microsoft is calling these devices HPCs (Hand-Held PCs), in order to differentiate between them and personal organizers or digital assistants.

These devices are supplied with a light-pen to provide ease of use and to substitute the use of the tiny-keyboard wherever possible. What's more, HPCs come with reasonably clear screen, offering resolution of 480x240 pixels and equipped with batteries that can handle long hours of use.

Also, there is a host of applications (word processing, spreadsheet, etc) which resemble miniature editions of the regular full-blown applications. Already, some excellent HPC models are available from companies like LG Electronics, NEC, Compaq and others. These are priced at just under \$700 on the international market.

When can we expect to see these little wonders here in Jordan? Well, very soon, but local dealers are not too enthusiastic about the sales potential of HPCs, mainly due to pricing and because the Jordanian computer buyer has been slow to adopt notebooks. So, you can imagine that market will take a while before it embraces hand-held devices, even if they run Microsoft Windows.

Jordanian companies, appointed as Middle East dealers

OVER THE past months, a welcome trend has begun to emerge, which is the appointment of Jordanian computer and information technology companies as regional (Middle Eastern) dealers for well-known brands.

General Computer & Electronics (GCE) has been appointed by Tatung, a leading Taiwanese PC manufacturer, as regional dealer. Already, GCE is running an operation across the region through appointed distributors in countries like Egypt, Syria, Qatar and others. More appointments are on the way. Also, Computer & Engineering Bureau (CEB) have been appointed as regional dealer for Motorola Computers. These products are mainly RISC-based servers.

Both GCE and CEB are among the largest, and oldest, computer companies in the country. It is a pleasure to see international companies, handling over their Middle Eastern business to experienced Jordanian dealers. Surely, it is time, this trend developed and grew. After all, who is better suited? Jordanian computer and information technology personnel and professionals are among the most experienced in the region. In fact, if you were to inspect the regional offices based in the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, chances are you will find many Jordanians in charge of the operations. However, appointment as a dealer for the Middle East out of Amman is a step in the correct direction, to better position as one of the centers of IT in the region.

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A test of endurance

JAMES HENDERSON reaches his physical limit in one of the world's toughest races.

It was a marmot that set me thinking. He was dozing on a boulder, luxuriating in the August sun on a steep rubble slide in the craggy mountains of British Columbia, Canada, rolling over, alternately warming back and belly. A leisurely life.

For him at least. Struggling up towards him, we had been going for three days with just a couple of hours' sleep a night, humping huge rucksacks over glaciers and up and down mountains. We were in a race and our team was pushing on steadily to the next checkpoint. As we passed him, hurried and desperate, the marmot eyed me with detached curiosity. I could barely imagine two more different states of mind.

The competition was the Eco-Challenge, which is variously called an adventure sports race and an expedition competition. In the range of tough sporting events that I have seen and taken part in this has to be the most extreme. And, oddly enough, one of the most compelling.

Eco-Challenge 1996 was a week of horse-riding and running, hiking through mountains and on glaciers, canoeing, mountain-biking, more glaciers, this time with climbing on ropes, white-water rafting and finally mountain-biking again.

There were 70 teams of five men and women who would be racing over a course about 300 miles long, set in magnificent, remote terrain.

We started at dawn, in a valley beneath 6,000 and 7,000ft peaks. One hundred and fifty horses and more than 200 runners set off together in a torrent, crystallising into their teams as they rode and ran 28 miles to the first checkpoint. After a river crossing, which involved hurling ourselves into a gurgling, grey glacier outflow, we changed our equipment and headed up into the mountains for a three-day slog.

Twice, either side of the first glacier, we slept for two or three hours, in forest so thick that we could go no farther. On the third morning we crossed a river by Tyrolean traverse (ropes slung between trees), checked the map and looked up... a 4,000ft climb.

Groaning, we made our way up, grasping at the thin undergrowth for purchase, leaving the tree line, up to the bare rocks and eventually reaching the snow line. At the top, as we crowned the ledge, we met a camera team, freshly flown in, filming our every sweaty and breathless move.

An event like this is a huge production there were 500 runners and assistants and 320 event personnel and would be impossible to stage without sponsorship. The total cost of Eco-Challenge 1996 was \$4.5m the insurance bill alone was

\$70,000 half of which was provided by the Discovery Channel, which screened the event.

Back on the mountain, it looked as though we would spend a night in the forest, now without food, knowing that the checkpoint was just a few miles away. As we thrashed through the dry, lower branches of the pine trees, a silver light, gradually became visible. Moonlight. A clearing. A logging track. Relief. A quick walk down the hill. Familiar voices. Coca-Cola. Tortilla chips. Clean socks. Food.

But no rest. Immediately we were briefed and sent off on a 50-mile canoeing section, along rivers and lakes. Again, the mountains towered thousands of feet above us, shifting their next day. Surrounded by such beauty, without another team in sight, it might have been easy to forget that we were in a race, to give in and doze in the sun. But an urgency tickles constantly at the brainstem: on, on, on...

And it is after three or four days that races such as these really come into their own. They are not about aerobic fitness (marathon running), although that is important because the fitter you are, the stronger you are when bumping up against exhaustion. The key is endurance, and the mental attitude that comes with stamina. This is a sport where many of the best competitors are over 35.

After 16 hours' sitting, legs buckled as we heaved ourselves out of the canoes. But the blood was soon back in them. The next leg was mountain biking and it started with a 3,000ft climb and then climbed and fell for 50 miles along the wall of a great valley.

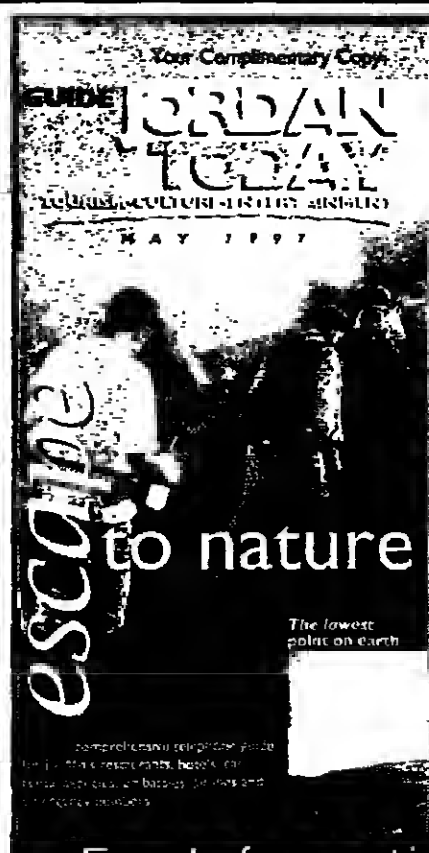
The sleep factor really began to tell after five days. We started to take five-minute sleep sops. Tactical thinking and race experience are important at moments like this. You must know when to stop. Another team might go past while you doze, but they in turn will have a tough time and then you will pass them. Clever strategy can suddenly put you up the order.

We reached the changeover point late that afternoon, under the threat of a first cut-off. Ahead was at least three days of glaciers, white-water rafting and mountain-biking and not enough time to complete it. It seemed a pity, but in 20th position we had been timed out of the race.

It is always interesting to see human beings at the limits of endeavour, here they were pushing themselves to the point of physical collapse. They (we) endured a lack of food, serious sleep deprivation, some physical discomfort and often pain, and finally desperation people do become irrational.

A good team, however, will train its individual competitive streaks into a single potent; members look after one another, offering ragged relations with humour. For some, among the top competitors, it is refined into the will to win, but with teams spread out over a matter of days, only a handful can hope to come first.

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about 200 people for
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Arab East Jerusalem.
construction has caused
impasse in the talks.

A "Save the Peace" in Tel Aviv's Yeha Rabin Square, timed to coincide with Netanyahu's visit to Washington in April, drew a crowd smaller than the 20,000 protesters predicted by organizers.

The mood was almost tired. According to activists and sympathizers on Israeli left, there are reasons for the movement's muddled state, ranging from its complacency to the previous Labor government to the creation by Netanyahu's zigzag political since he took office June. But faced with new political realities, peace movement also failed to articulate a response, keeping its sympathizers like Rabin.

Continued on page

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